The Magazine for Advanced Comic Book Collectors!

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

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ON THE COVER:
An original DC war comic recreation painting by the legendary Russ Heath.

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FAREWELL TOM

Friend and fellow collector Tom French died March 17th, after losing his battle with lung cancer. Tom was a familiar face to nearly everyone who ever manned a dealer's table at the Comic-Con International: San Diego for the past two decades. I first met Tom French in 1973 at the Con (the only one held on Harbor Island)... Tom had been in the hobby a little more than a year. He waltzed up to our table, politely introduced himself, and then we chatted about the hobby for awhile as we watched Bruce Hamilton auction off two Barks paintings to Terry Stroud and Barry Bauman for well under a grand each (those were the days). We drank a soda together, shared information about our favorite titles and characters, and even watched an episode of the Flash Gordon serial in the film room. We just got along great right from the start.

Eventually, Tom revealed that he loved the Caped Crusader and ended up purchasing Fine copies of *Batman* #20, 23, 25, and 29 from me... all four books for the then princely sum of $50. In those days, spending that kind of dough put Tom squarely in the serious collector category. That was the first of countless books that we sold and traded to one another.

It wasn't long after the '73 Con that Tom (and Virginia) began volunteering for convention duty and Tom eventually became the dealers' room coordinator. I personally observed Tom performing the duties of that position for two decades. You can tell a lot about a person's character by observing them "under fire" (so to speak) and under fire is exactly what Tom was. Imagine the human relations skills required to deal with an ocean of collectors and huxters from all over the country... all setting up at once... many exhausted from traveling all night... most anxious and irritable... and all demanding the best tables. In spite of it all, Tom was the room's Rock of Gibraltar... the person that I and all the others could always count on to work things out and solve the problems.

I often commented to my brother that "I wouldn't have Tom French's job for all the comics in this room!" Yet Tom somehow seemed perfectly suited for the yearly challenge, I think primarily because he had the patience of Job. What most don't realize is that the job of dealers' room coordinator wasn't just an episodic job... it literally took a whole year to plan. Think about that... one whole year of your life to coordinate a four-day event.

I still smile when I recall one incident that happened while the Con was still held at the old downtown convention center... after Tom had been coordinator for many years. The "old guard" no longer ran the Con and the "young Turks" had acceded to power... and they talked of ousting Tom from his beloved position for someone new. Unbeknownst to the erstwhile Mr. French, a petition was immediately circulated in the dealers' room with large, hastily scrawled lettering at the top which read "IF TOM GOES, WE GO!" I gladly signed that piece of paper... and so did every other huxter in the room, until the countless signatures overflowed onto the back. It is rare for collectors and dealers to agree on anything, but the unanimous outcry that day sent a clear message to the convention committee about who we wanted to run the dealers' room. We wanted Tom, and we didn't want to hear any more nonsense about replacing one of the most valuable contributors in the history of the convention!

But my fondest memories of Tom were quieter ones, like taking a break from the hectic pace of the dealers' room at Tom and Virginia's table... and visiting Tom at home occasionally, "swapping funny books" and talking comics.

I'll miss you Tom... especially at the Con in the dealers' room, and at the meetings of the San Diego chapter of AACC. They just won't be the same without you...

Gary Gary M. Carter

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#73 F72/8 MIN BID $350

#136 F74/7 MIN BID $175

#145 NM92/8 MIN BID $300

#148 NM90/8 MIN BID $200

#64 F72/7 MIN BID $850

#102 VF75/8 MIN BID $650

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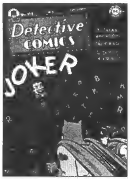

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Made New Jersey Proud

Just wanted to say thanks to the people at CBM for helping me out after the postal service ate the back issues that I ordered. Another thanks for CBM #42–a great tribute to Joe Kubert, that man has really made New Jersey proud. In fact, his artwork made a major impression on me as a child. one of my first purchases off the rack was the Brave & The Bold #34 which is still in my collection today. His artwork featuring Hawkman in the run was one of the best for that period. and not soon forgotten. Well, 'til we take another ride on your monthly time machine, my frat's off to all of you. Great Job! Thank You.

John Vienne. New Jersey

From the desk of Aaron Manson, M.D.

I suggest you reprint the covers of some Justice League comics with their antecedents–you could call it "The Genealogy of Justice League Covers"–or something. The ones that I'd like to see are:

Justice League #4: Mystery In Space #9
Justice League #6: All Star #42
Justice League #10: Sensation #109
Justice League #17: Mystery In Space #61
Justice League #19: Mystery In Space #17
Justice League #22: Mystery In Space #18

Please feel free to add any that I may have missed.

As an older collector and reader of comic books, I still prefer DC science fiction, especially Mystery In Space #s 1–40 which include some of the best comic covers ever published. These covers combined the talents of Julius Schwartz, Gil Kane, and Murphy Anderson at their peak.

These books are also relative bargains, with high grade copies selling for (only!) several hundred dollars. Many of these covers were recycled in later books, e.g. Justice League of America. The early Adam Strange issues were also terrific. I would love to see CBM do a photographic review of these early covers with their later counterparts.

Aaron Manson, M.D., New York

Anyone seen Blue Beetle #6?

Recently, while browsing through boxes of comics at a local show, I came across a copy of Charlton Premiere #3, Jan. 1968. On the last page was an ad stating "Buy Charlton Comics. (We need the money!)" It showed six of their new books which were to be published, such as The Many Ghosts of Doctor Graves, Fighting Marines, etc.

What caught my eye was a cover for Blue Beetle #6, Apr. "B.B. Meets the Spectre". The Overstreet Guide lists the Blue Beetle run ending at #5, and says that #6 only appeared in the fanzine, 'The Charlton Portfolio'. Could this book have made it to the newsstands?

Owen R. Auer, New York

Startling Terror Tales #11 Variant?

I am an avid L.B. Cole collector and also what I like to call a cover collector, someone who may collect certain books based solely on the cover image. Of course, L.B. Cole is a master of producing cover images that even attract people who have no appreciation for comic books. I can also be greedy about the books I love, sometimes buying in multiple copies. Back in January, I purchased a copy of Startling Terror Tales #11–the spider cover, at a convention. It looks like the one on page 44 of CBM #33 and why shouldn't it, there's no other cover variation right? Well, looking through Gerber's PhotoJournal I noticed that the copy they photographed has a darker background behind the word "Terror" which I thought was an error in possibly the book having a printing defect or the photo coming out too dark in that portion. Hmmm.

This past week I purchased another copy of the same book, this time through the mail. After receiving the book, I noticed that this one is like the one in the Photo-Journal. The color behind the "Terror" portion is definitely black not electric blue. So maybe it was an accident some were printed in blue and some in black. I then noticed that the lettering used on the word "Tales" is totally different. On the black cover the lettering used is the same as that which was used for "The Ghost Spider Of Death", a more stencilled look. Also, the issues that followed use that stencilled lettering for the word "Tales". On the "Blue" background cover the lettering used for "Tales" is totally different and easily discerned from the "Black" background copy. Could there be two printings? Was production stopped to modify the

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book? I don't know, I'm speculating at this point. However, I have researched this a little. Both books are identical in every aspect except for the color of the background and the different lettering used for "Tales". Same ads, both were printed in the USA, both have July 1952 as their publication date. Printing registration is very clear on the inside pages for both books (see the Overstreet Price Guide for Canadian reprints). My "Blue" copy has an arrival date of May 9 stamped on the front cover. The article printed in CBM #33 mentions nothing of these variations. I tried calling the dealer who sold me the "Black" copy to see if he knew anything about this. In his 20 plus years of collecting he has seen approximately 10 copies of this book in various grades, all of which had the "Black" background. He is as stumped as I am. I then went to the monthly comic convention here in L.A. to talk to a few dealers, especially the one who sold me the "Blue" copy. No one knew what I was talking about.

My theory to this variation, based on the belief that the first two issues of the whole series were one-shots and starting with #12 was the beginning of the series. I think that the "Black" cover was what led to the beginning of the series and the "Blue" cover was actually a one shot. I'm reaching here, but the logical path of the lettering for the cover would be to stay consistent, which it did on the issues following with the "Black" cover's lettering.

Scarcity, I can imagine, is difficult to pinpoint. Obviously, through my investigation it would seem that the "Blue" cover is scarcer than the "Black". I've spoken to other dealers and watched auctions for another "Blue" cover to surface and to my surprise the only other one I've seen is in CBM #33 on page 44. The prices for these books already on the rise may grow even faster especially for the elusive "Blue" background #11. I actually waited for a while to find another copy of the "Blue" before I let eat out of the bag, but that attempt failed (told you I was greedy).

Greg Matson, California

Wood art on record covers

I was very impressed with the Wally Wood articles in Comic Book Marketplace #44. I have been a comic book reader for more than 20 years and Wally Wood was one of the first artists whose work I could identify. Lou Mougin's article, "Wood All Over the Place," mentioned the work Wood did for Peter Pan records in the mid-'60s. Sadly, these beautiful album covers were not shown in CBM. I have included the four 1970's re-issued albums I have, with the hope you can reproduce them for other Wood fans who may have never seen them. I purchased them at Wuxtry Records, a record and comic shop in Athens, Georgia, last summer. The re-issues were called High Camp Adventures and were put out by Bell Records. I assume they look like the original Peter Pan records which were called Adventure Records. I'm thrilled to have them in my collection. I did not know they existed until I saw them at Wuxtry.

Also, I was pleased to see you reproduced the cover of Wham-O-Giant Comics. I know the trouble you must have gone through to reproduce it. The standard color laser copier is 11" x 17" which only gets about 1/4 of the cover. I know, I have tried to reproduce it to show my friends the incredible cover. By the way, I have two copies of Wham-O-Giant Comics, one in near mint, and one fine with a double cover! I bought the double cover issue at Dragoncon in Atlanta in 1995 for $15. I was showing it proudly to anyone who wanted to see it. Most people had never heard of it or seen it before. Several people offered to buy it from me immediately. I showed it to several artists in Artist Alley at the show. One of the artists was J. David Spurlock who owns the character, Radian.

John C. Canfield, Georgia

Why Suspense #3 response!

I am writing in response to "But Why Suspense #3", in the Marketplace Mail column of the January '97 issue of CBM.

Please tell the author that I gladly traded some heavy weight books, including a "killer" VF NM copy of Spider-Man #1 (as described by the dealer who took back the book as part of the trade)... plus paid even more than you paid for your copy (and would have gladly paid more!) Also, I recently turned down a very significant offer for it... how can I sell something so important and rare?

Continental's Suspense run are, in fact, the first horror comics as far as covers go. What is more gruesome than people about to be mutilated, or spiders with skull faces with humans in their webs? The Suspense run precedes the January '194?' debut of the alleged first horror book, Eerie #1, by over three years. (See the Gerber Photo-Journal, Vol. II, page 669.)

In my view, your *Continued on page 79*

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15 ATOMIC BOMB #1 (1945) DS/rusty staple ow/solid GVG $ 40 -50
22 BLACK RIDER #10 (Sep 50) Glossy nice FN-, TEC, YEP. Origin issue! $60 - 80
26 BOYS RANCH #2 (Dec 50) Nice VG+, off white to white paper! S & K $ 90 -100
30 CAPTAIN MARVEL ADV #60 (May 46) Nice VG, TEC, lt YEP $ 45 -55
32 CAPTAIN MARVEL ADV #72 (May 47) Nice VG, lt YEP $ 40 - 50
46 CRIME CRAZED LOT: All-True Crime #42 Sharp VG; Crime Detective V2#3 VG,V2#4 VG; Crime Must Pay the Penalty #17 VG, #19 glossy FN-; HeadlineComics #44 solid VG SR, #46 VG+; Justice Traps the Guilty #17 VG, #24nice VG+; Perfect Crime #7 nice VGF; Wanted #32 solid VG, #34 nice VGF. Incredible stuff! $160 -180
85 MAD #3 (Feb 53) Glossy GD+, yllg. pc tape inside BC $ 85 -100
88 MAD HATTER #1 (Jan 66) VG+, sharp book, wht cvr, lt YPG. $140 -180
93 MONTE HALE WESTERN #35 (Apr 49) FN, v sl yllg-white. $ 50 - 60
94 MYSTERIOUS ADVENTURES #1 (Mar 51) VGF; fresh, creamy to white paper,2 3/8" or less tears BE FC & 3 BE BC. 1/4" lwr Sp spl. Appealing! $100 -125
98 NYOKA THE JUNGLE GIRL(Fawcett) #12,15,18,19,21 all VG-VGF$140 -170
104 RANGERS COMICS #58 (Apr 51) FN-, TEC. lt YEP, sharp! $ 37 - 43
105 REAL CLUE CRIME STORIES #5,6,7,8,9(2),10. All six VG to FN- $ 75 -100
107 RED MASK #48 (Mar 55) Sharp VGF, sl yllg to wht. Ghost Rider! $ 40 - 48
108 RICHIE RICH #5 (Jul 61) Glossy FN, VF/ TEC. Hard to find $ 80 -100
110 ROCKY LANE WESTERN #2, #4 both VG, sl SR, lt yllg paper, solid $120 -140
114 SANTA CLAUS PARADE #3 (Jan 55) Sharp VGF, 100 page giant! $ 40 - 60
116 SHADOW COMICS V4#8 (Nov 44) Solid VG, yllg $ 80 -110
119 SILVER STREAK #2 (Jan 40) Complete FA-, very heavily magic taped inside& out, extra staples, SR, many tears and creases, browning, brittle on most edges, chipping, pcs out two pages on LR panel, does not affect ward balloons. Overall a very low grade but complete reading copy of one of GA's neatest books! Simon c/a.$150 -250
123 SPIRIT SECTION (Aug 11 40) Sharp FVF, creamy-off wht pages! $ 42 - 50
129 SPY SMASHER MIGHTY MIDGET #11 (1942) Nice VF+, sl yllg $ 70 - 80
135 THIS MAGAZINE IS HAUNTED #1 (Oct 51) Nice VG+, white cvr, creamy-white pages, grease pencil in gr. Dr Death as host. Moldoff c/a $100 -130
139 TOM MIX WESTERN #8 (Aug 48) Nice VG+, off wht cvr, v lt YEP $ 55 - 65
141 TWO-GUN KID #4 (Oct 48) GVG, sl yllg-wht paper, partial BSP, nice $ 35 -45
151 WOW COMICS #19 (Nov 43) VG+, wht cvr, lt YEP, partial pull to staple. Nice Mary Marvel fighting pirates FC, Mr Scarlet, Commando Yank! $ 80 -110
172 3-D BATMAN (1953) Solid GVG, 1.8" lwr sp spl, 25" upper sp spl, whtcvr, lt tan pgs, no glasses. Solid issue of this oversize book. $100 -170
182 BATMAN #200 (Mar 68) Nice VG+, clean, flat, lt yllg $ 40 - 50
253 DETECTIVE #111 (May 46) Solid GD+, some brown paint on FC, LR corner of BC/last few pgs has "chew" area, white pgs, sl YEP. Dramatic FC $ 70 - 90
267 EIGHTY PAGE GIANT #1 (Aug 64) Solid VG, yllg. Nice copy $ 60 - 75
276 FLASH #137 (Jan 63) Nice GD, sl yllg. GA Flash, JSA cameo $ 45 - 50
290 GANG BUSTERS #17 (Aug 50) VG, SR; #19 VG, sl SR. Nice paper $ 80 -100
306 GREEN LANTERN #40 (Oct 65) Glossy VG-, YEC, YEP, sl SR $100 -120
313 HAWKMAN #1 (Apr 64) Solid GVG, LSP, lt YEP, lt YEP, nice book $ 90 -110
318 HOUSE OF MYSTERY #1 (Dec 51) Solid FaGD, v sl DS, 1/3 BC gone, otherwise solid , lt yllg. Scarce early fifties DC! $125 -175
356 MY GREATEST ADVENTURE #1 (Jan 55) Solid GVG, lt yllg. Scarce! $175
362 MYSTERY IN SPACE #75 (May 62) Glossy FN-, ex sl foxing FC. $ 80 - 90
370 OUR FIGHTING FORCES #1 (Oct 54) Solid VG, yllg. Scarce book $150 -200
387 SGT BILKO'S PVT DOBERMAN #1 (Jul 58) Glossy solid GD+, sl yllg$ 50 - 65
405 STAR SPANGLED COMICS #15 (Dec 42) VG, TEC, YEP, minor chipping LR corner FC, book cut slightly oblong, vsl foxing, tape rep. few chips BC $ 50 -100
413 STRANGE ADVENTURES #9 (Jan 51) Apparent VG, chipping RE FC,yllg. solid FN spine but miscut, possibly due to "repair" job, still very solid, clean $200 -250
457 TALES OF THE UNEXPECTED #3 (Jul 56) Solid GD, nice copy $ 40-50
481 WORLD'S FINEST COMICS #6 (Sum 42) VG, lt YIC. creamy to white pages,1/8" & 1/16" color thins LL FC. Attractive very solid issue. S&K cover $300 -360
482 WORLD'S FINEST #33 (Mar 48) Solid GD+, BEC w/chipping, BC chipping w/1"triangular pc out LE BC. YEP. Still a solid issue $ 75 -100
483 WORLD'S FINEST #39 (Apr 49) VG, TEC, v sl YEP, 3/4" sp spl at top/bottom. Clean appealing issue w/tickertape Batman, Supes & Robin FC $120 -150
507 AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #45 (Feb 67) Glossy beautiful VF+, 1/16" micro chip upper RE FC, nice creamy to white paper $ 75 - 90
527 AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #129 (Feb 74) Glossy sharp FN, sl YEP $120 -130
564 CAPTAIN MARVEL #1 VGF; #1 VG; #2-8,10-14,16-23,25(FN-),26-33,57(NM) Except as noted, all 32 VG to FVF, nice VGF ave. Starlin $175 -200
569 CONAN #1 (Oct 70) Apparent nice VF, creamy to white. Close inspection reveals possible professional clean & press. Nice issue $ 90 -140
573 DAREDEVIL #2 (Jun 64) Solid GD, yllg; staples partially pulled. $ 60 - 70
597 FANTASTIC FOUR #48 (Mar 66) Glossy VG, lt TEC, YEP, nice $180 -220
599 FANTASTIC FOUR #53 (Aug 66) NM-, creamy cover, white pages. $ 70 - 90
665 JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY #89 (Feb 63) Sharp VG, sl yllg, nice $ 60 - 75
675 JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY #116 (May 65) Sharp VF, sl yllg-white $ 45 - 60
731 MARVEL COMICS SUPER SPECIAL #1 (1977) NM-, KISS issue! $ 50 - 65
795 SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #2 (Oct 74) NM, white. Adams! $ 35 - 40
800 SAVAGE TALES #2 (Oct 73) VFNM, white! Smith, Williamson! $ 35 - 45
803 SGT FURY #4 (Nov 63) Glossy VGF, creamy to white; #69 VG+ $ 45 - 60
840 STAR WARS #1 VF-; #2 FN+; #3 VF; #4 FN+; #5 FN; #6 VF+; #8 VF; #9 VFNM;#10 VFNM; #11-13,14(2),15-20 all VF/btr; #22 FVF; #23 NM. $340 -380
853 STRANGE TALES #104 (Jan 63)Glossy solid GVG,lt yllg.1st Trapster $ 45 - 55
869 ROCKY AND HIS FRIENDS FC#1208 (Nov 61) VG, CF det, yllg $ 50 - 60
1074 TARZAN #24 Sharp VGF, creamy-wht, store stamp FC; #30 FN, creamy-wht,nice; #34 sharp FN+, creamy-wht; #60 FVF, creamy-wht. Sharp books! $130 -150
1079 TUROK #21 sharp FN; #22 FN; #23 FN+; #24 beautiful VGF. Nice! $ 80 -100
1096 UNCLE SCROOGE #4 solid FaGD; #10 GD; #12 GVG; #16 GVG, #22GVG, DS; #27 VG, sl SR; #28 VG; #31 VG; #36 VG+; #36 VG; #38 VG+. $240 -260
1099 UNCLE SCROOGE #131, 132, 135-149. All 17 FN+ to NM, VF ave $190 -220
1112 WALT DISNEY'S COMICS AND STORIES #440-471, 473-479, 481-498, 500, 502-508. All 65 VF/better. A beautiful run of fresh white issues! $260 -300
1136 KATY KEENE PIN-UP PARADE #5 (1959) Glossy sharp FN-, nice white cover& creamy pages, couple small puzzles completed on interior pages $ 50 - 65
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The Mirthful Monster

By Pat S. Calhoun

Dick Briefer's handling of the Frankenstein monster through the 1940s and early 1950s resulted in one of the greatest comic book characters–and certainly the most schizophrenic. Weird Words has already paid homage to the horror series of the pre-Code days when Frankenstein's monster fought zombies and dinosaurs and mad scientists in memorably harrowing adventures. The time has come to celebrate the earlier incarnation of the series, from the post-War days, when–instead of murder and mayhem–the monster's antics were packaged to produce chuckles and chortles from an audience that was hungry for humor. Victory over the Nazi menace had put the country in a good mood, and after five and a half years of propaganda, where the majority of comics had superheros helping hammer the enemy, people were ready for funnybooks that were really funny. When Briefer's monster got his own title from Prize in mid-1945 (after the strip had run for four years in their flagship title, *Prize Comics*) the werewolves and mummies and curious creatures from myths and legends devoted themselves to comedy, and it was (and is!) a joy to behold.

Frankenstein #3 (July/August 1946) is full of the wacky and exuberant charm Briefer brought to the series–what a spin on Mary Shelley's 1818 fable of science probing the secrets of life! The storytelling is as breezy as the art, in a clean "bigfoot" style, with that trademark nose over eyes on Franky's physiognomy. The first yarn has Frankenstein thinking that a job would make him a more normal person–so he gets hired on at a junkyard. To impress the owner, he brings in the equipment from Doctor Frankenstein's laboratory. The junkman sets it up only to discover that it can make "people"... but they pop like balloons at the prick of a sharp object. They make a lot of mini-Frankys and some good gags ensue in the course of this 15-pager, "Frankenstein's Family", including a clever finale.

In "Frankenstein and the Monsters" Franky is sent to clean up a nest of escaped convicts whose hideout had been the site of an atomic bomb test that hideously distorted their features. The female cons all think that Franky is so cute that they mow down their own menfolk with a scythe of bullets! There's a wonderfully politically incorrect "anything goes" quality that runs through some of these madcap capers.

"Frankenstein and the Mummies" casts Franky as an archeologist's assistant, bringing four mummies back to the States from a newly-discovered tomb in Egypt. A riot breaks out aboard ship after Franky lets the mummies out of their sarcophagi and they go up on deck to play shuffleboard! I won't reveal the ending that ties this eight-pager up tightly but will just say that the "breezy writing" was capable of puffing its way into a perfect plot.

The book closes with "Frankenstein and the Time Machine"–which shows how easy it is to explore the past and future on the back lots of a Hollywood studio. There's a notable cameo in the future part of the story featuring Superman as an old codger who can only leap two feet off the ground. At the bottom of the last panel Briefer acknowledges a writing assist from old pro Bruce Elliot. It's a fantastic issue.

By 1946 Dick Briefer already ranked as an old pro himself, having over a decade of experience, dating back to 1936's *Wow*, where he displayed his affinity for the classic monsters with an adaptation of "The Hunchback of Notre Dame". He was also the artist on Fox's Rex Dexter of Mars, an engaging science fiction strip that ran in *Mystery Men Comics*.

A charming experiment in breakfast cooking takes place as a green fog begins to fill the lab on the cover of Frankenstein #10 (Nov/Dec 1947), the first of "52 pages of thrills and fun" issues.

Frankenstein #7 (May/June 1947) shows Briefer (with an acknowledgment for writing assists to Ed Goggin at the end of the first tale) working the light touch with a sure hand. The first story has Franky delivering a comeuppance to an old miser so mean that he builds a playground in a neighborhood full of kids but keeps it locked up and empty. Then the merry monster helps a man with no head get a girlfriend, which gets Franky started in the matchmaking business. The third story takes off on that riff as Frankenstein goes out rowing and encounters the Flying Dutchman–doomed to sail the seas forever unless he can find a woman who loves him. Well, Franky fixes him up, but the Dutchman soon discovers that married life can be an even worse curse and hightails it back to the high seas.

Franky's out rowing again in the next yarn, a brilliant five-page revamp of the Lorelei legend of a beautiful sea-witch whose sweet music lured mariners to shipwreck on her shoals. When Frankenstein shows up and surprises her–a boat manages to land on the island for the first time in thousands of years! As the sailors race uphill towards her den she lets Franky play a few notes on her lyre, and at the first awkward pluck of the strings the entire ship's crew is dealt a stunning blow. By the time they recover and again rush uphill, they find Franky alone–in one of Lorelei's dresses while drying his own clothes. And that really sends them screaming!

This issue features a "true crime" story by the Simon and Kirby team. It's a tense, if standard, six-page "search, setback, showdown" of Detective "Red-Hot" Blaze against a crazed cop-killer. It's packaged with a two-thirds page ad for *Headline Comics*. a Prize title that showcased a lot of S-&-K post war crime.

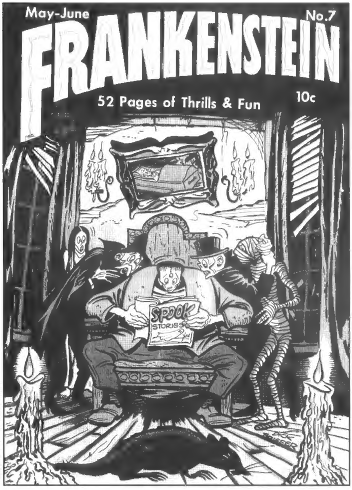
Frankenstein wraps up the ish in a tale of revenge by a rival magician after getting elected president of the Magician's Club. The losing candidate makes a voodoo doll of Franky, but–of course–ends up getting stuck with a few pins himself.

Frankenstein #10 (November/December 1947) offers one of the most fun and colorful covers of the run. The first story is a zany 14-page epic where Franky is an assistant to a mad scientist who grows a giant chicken liver that crawls off like "The Blob"–devouring everything in its path. In the second tale Franky befriends a lonely centaur and helps him find a career as jockey and racehorse. The story is followed by a full-page house ad for more S-&-K crime–the graphic electric chair cover for the first issue of *Justice Traps The Guilty*.

Next, Frank solves the mystery of local "invisible man" sightings in a somewhat slight six-pager, but the last story is a rousing 12-pager. "The Terrible Werewolf". This one starts with an awesome splash page of the wolfman–fork in hand–seemingly about to eat a live human child. But the werewolf, like many of the monsters in Franky's world, is only lonely, the result of his physical "differences". Frank, now a traveling salesman for hair products, douses the lonely lycanthrope with hair remover and makes a new man out of him. The recurring theme of "belonging" added an admirable humanism to the series.

After issue #17 (January/February 1949) the magazine took a three-year hiatus, to return with #18 in the new horror format–in March 1952, when horror and fantasy were the most popular genres. Working as well with the 180-degree shift in tone, Briefer produced a string of lurid and lively yarns (sometimes restyling plots and characters from the earlier series) that ran through issue #33 (October/November 1954). After the Comics Code cut the field down to a shadow (8%) of its former glory, Briefer was one of the artists to leave the business and move on to advertising and commercial art. ■

Pat Calhoun lives in Santa Rosa, California and has been collecting, researching and appreciating comic books since the early 1960s.



ALL COVERS © THEIR PUBLICATIONS

Dick Briefer engineered a nicely balanced cover for **Frankenstein** #7 (May/Jun 1947). Note the arrangement of the big black rat, the candles, a crooked picture of a corpse, and a crowd crouched behind the latest issue of **Spook Stories**.

Franky meets an elderly Superman on a trip into the future in **Frankenstein** #3 (Jul/Aug 1946). Along with the historic early satire of the Man of Steel, this hilarious issue also features three more misadventures of the mirthful monster.

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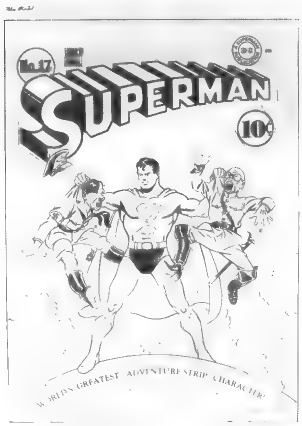

Fred Ray, original art for the cover of Superman No. 17. Auction estimate: $20,000–40,000

Highlights:

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Detective Comics No. 27, unrestored copy, A.C.G. fine 67. Auction estimate: $40,000–60,000

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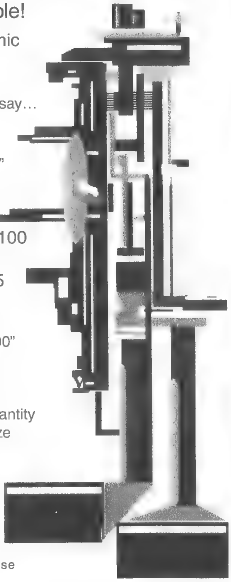

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Adventures into the Comic Book Unknown!

ACG's innovation gave birth to a genre!

By Michelle Nolan

Comic book collectors have a tendency to lump all horror comics together into a short-lived, infamous genre. In the case of the pioneering horror comic book series, however, that would be, well, a horrible mistake. Not many collectors realize what a gamble the infant American Comics Group (ACG) took in the Fall of 1948 when it launched the first successful horror comic, *Adventures into the Unknown!*

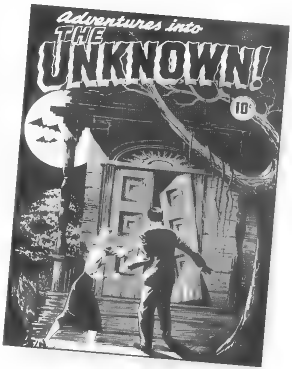
It is technically true that the then-equally young Avon Comics deserves credit for publishing the first horror comic, the one-shot Eerie dated January of 1947, which predates *Adventures into the Unknown!* #1 by more than a year. But the Eerie one-shot was neither interesting nor successful (although Avon came back with a better 17-issue run of the same title from 1951-54).

In stark contrast, ACG's *Adventures into the Unknown!* must have been an immediate success, in addition to being one of the few horror comics that ran 52 pages. It was listed as a quarterly with #1 (Fall 1948) but immediately became a bi-monthly with #2 (December 1948/January 1949). And it took only 15 issues to become a monthly (with #15, January 1951).

Considering that this remarkable title carried the banner for an entirely new genre in comic book publishing, that is a noticeable record of success. Even more interesting, the comic came from a publisher that rarely had more than a few titles on the stands at the same time.

Adventures into the Unknown! ran 33 issues in the 52-page format, lasting longer in that regard than all but a handful of titles from Dell and Archie. By the time the last 52-page issue was published (#53, July 1952), almost all DC titles had abandoned the 52-page format nine or ten months earlier, and most publishers had "given up the 52-page ghost" long before that.

Richard Hughes, the famed workhorse editor who packaged comics for the Sangor Shop earlier in the 1940s, was the guiding hand behind *Adventures into the Unknown!* (and, for that matter, every title ACG published until the company went under in 1967). He probably edited every story ever published in the comic and may have written the majority of them as well, especially after the title gave up the 52-page format.



AITU! #1 (Fall 1948) is the first issue of the first continuously published horror comic. Note the atmospheric cover.

Adventures Into The Unknown! #1-33

#1 (Fall 1948)
Cover: An old, dark house, "The Werewolf Stalks" 8 pgs., "The Living Ghost" 12 pgs., "Strange Spirits (Voodoo)" 1 pg., "It Walked By Night" 9 pgs., "The Cursed Pistol" 1 pg., "The Castle of Otranto" (adaptation of Horace Walpole story) 7 pgs., "True Ghosts of History" 2 pgs., "Haunted House "6 pgs

#2 (Dec 1948/Jan 1949)
Cover: Couple in life raft see a face in a mountain, "Kill, Puppets, Kill" 9 pgs.; "Out of the Unknown" (with the Living Ghost) 10 pgs., "The Old Tower's Secret" by Edmond Good 7 pgs.; "The Master's Hand" 9 pgs.; "Phantom of the Seas" by Paul Reinman 8 pgs., "True Ghosts of History" 2 pgs

#3 (Feb/Mar 1949)
Cover: Hand comes out of elaborately colored mummy's case, "The Witch Cat of Salem" 7 pgs.; "The Vampire Prowls" 9 pgs "Strange Spirits" 1 pg., "The Specter of Little Dread House" 9 pgs., "Do Such Things Exist? -The Affair of the Ferrick Phantom" 7 pgs., "True Ghosts of History" 2 pgs. "Creekmore Curse" by Al Feldstein 9 pgs.

#4 (Apr/May 1949)
Cover: Dinosaur prepares to feast on two treasure hunters in cave, "Giants of the Unknown" 12 pgs.; "The Affair of Room 1313" 7 pgs.; "Back to Yesterday" by Leonard Starr 10 pgs., "Specialist in Spooks" 6 pgs., "True Ghosts of History" 2 pgs., "The Woman Wore Black" 7 pgs

#5 (Jun/Jul 1949)
Cover: Pterodactyl threatens couple in swamp, "She Dared the Unknown" 8 pgs., "Spirit of Frankenstein" (series began) 10 pgs., "The Blonde Witch of the Swamp" 8 pgs., "The Ghostly Crew" (Mystery of the Mary Celeste) 8 pgs "Strange Spirits" 2 pgs., "The Spectral Singer" 7 pgs

#6 (Aug/Sep 1949)
Cover: Giant hands threaten man in boat, "Bat By Night" 10 pgs., "Condemned--to Live!" 8 pgs "Strange Spirits" 1 pg., "Spirit of Frankenstein" 10 pgs., "True Ghosts of History" 3 pgs., "Journey Into the Unknown" (contest winner written by Lynneal H. Diamond) 3 pgs "The Devil's Disciple" 9 pgs

#7 (Oct/Nov 1949)
Cover: Ghost of pirate interrupts modern-day treasure seekers, "The Swami's Secret" 9 pgs., "The Ape Demon" 8 pgs., "The Mummy's Cloth" 7 pgs., "Drums of the Undead" 8 pgs., "The World Beyond the Mirror" 4 pgs., "The Case of the Roman Curse" 8 pgs

#8 (Dec 1949/Jan 1950)
Cover: Ghostly hand confronts couple in old dark house, "The Evil Ones" 8 pgs., "The Ghost from Algol" 10 pgs., "The Spirit of Frankenstein" 10 pgs., "The Sargasso Specter" 8 pgs., "The Men Who Went to the Devil" 8 pgs.; (Letters page includes letter from 17-year-old Nelson Bridwell)

#9 (Feb/March 1950)
Cover: Face of a snow monster threatens survivors of shipwreck, "Shadow of the Panther" 7 pgs. "The Thing at the Bottom of the Sea" 8 pgs., "True Ghosts" 1 pg., "When the Shaman Walked" by John Belfi 7 pgs., "The Grey One" (Third place winner of contest in #3, 1-page text story, probably pro debut of Nelson Bridwell (as byline reads)), "Spirit of Frankenstein" 7 pgs., "The Man in the Mirror" (Editor Richard Hughes meets a gruesome fate) 5 pgs., "True Ghosts of History" 1 pg., "The Boy Who Could Fly!" 8 pgs

#10 (Apr/May 1950)
Cover: Demon birds menace explorers in canyon, "The Boy Who Cried Wolf" 9 pgs., "Vampire's Castle" 8 pgs., "Spirit of Frankenstein" 9 pgs., "The Civic Spirit" 7 pgs., "Vision of Death" 8 pgs., "Uncanny Mysteries" 1 pg

#11 (Jun/Jul 1950)
Cover: Shadow of hands hovers over couple in old dark house, "Marriage of Death" 8 pgs., "Realm of the Mist Gods" 9 pgs., "Map of Magic" 9 pgs., "The Eel" 6 pgs., "Uncanny Mysteries" 2 pgs., "The Look of Death" 8 pgs

#12 (Aug/Sep 1950)
Cover: Cover by Whitney Fortune teller foresees man's death, "The Vampire Vision" 10 pgs., "Sold to Satan" 7 pgs., "When Witches Walked" 4 pgs., "The Haunted Castle" 1 pg., "Diary of Doom" 10 pgs., "True Ghosts of History" 2 pgs., "Spirit of Frankenstein" 8 pgs

#13 (Oct/Nov 1950)
Cover by Whitney: Couple flees Tyrannosaurus Rex, "The Vampire Swoops" 10 pgs., "Menace from Mars" 10 pgs., "A Night in Black Knoll" 9 pgs., "Beware the Jabberwock!" by Ogden Whitney 8 pgs., "The Lost Sou " 6 pgs

#14 (Dec 1950/Jan 1951)
Cover by Whitney: Neanderthal man threatens couple, "Land of the Zombies" 8 pgs., "The Haunted Morgue" 9 pgs., "Double Doom" 6 pgs., "The Face in the Moonstone" 8 pgs., "The Werewolf Strikes" 8 pgs

#15 (Jan 1951)
Cover by Whitney: Earth splits open, demons emerge, "The Monstrous Plant" 8 pgs.; "The Ghostly Goths" 8 pgs., "The Ghost That Didn't Die" by Ogden Whitney 9 pgs., "Goddess of the Beasts" by Fred Guardineer 9 pgs., "The Bride of Anubis" 7 pgs

#16 (Feb 1951)
Cover by Whitney: Woman dreams of demon, but it's not a dream, "Vigil Among the Vampires" 9 pgs., "Adventure in the Future" 9 pgs., "Demon in the Dark" 7 pgs.; "Lincoln's Strange Vision" 1 pg.; "Ghost Tiger" 7 pgs.; "Spirit of Frankenstein" 9 pgs., "Uncanny Mysteries" 1 pg

#17 (Mar 1951)
Cover by Whitney: Pterodactyls threaten couple, "The Ghostly Destroyer" 8 pgs.; "The Graveyard Wanderer" 7 pgs., "Ozark Witches" 2 pgs., "The Phantom that Foretold" 5 pgs., "Beast from the Beyond" 9 pgs., "Uncanny Mysteries" 2 pgs., "Curse of the Catacombs" 8 pgs

#18 (Apr 1951)
Cover by Whitney: Werewolf and other wolves threaten couple, "The Halls of Horror" 10 pgs., "True Ghost Tales" 1 pg., "The Undying Brain" 6 pgs., "Dream of Death!" by John Belfi 7 pgs., "The Zombie Summons" 8 pgs., "Tell Me a Ghost Story, The Phantom Pirate" 3 pgs., "Uncanny Mysteries" 1 pg., "Spook Buster's Doom" 6 pgs., "Uncanny Mysteries" 1 pg

#19 (May 1951)
Cover by Whitney: Boney hand opens mausoleum door, "The Howling Head" 8 pgs., "The Spectral Storm Ship" 1 pg.; "The Hands of Horror" 6 pgs., "The Vampire's Bane" 8 pgs., "True Ghosts of History" 3 pgs.; "The Ghoul's Grave" 8 pgs.; "Case of the Spectral Schoolboy" 2 pgs., "The Frozen Specter" 7 pgs

#20 (Jun 1951)
Cover by Whitney: couple battles zombies in graveyard, "The Little People's Revenge" 8 pgs., "The Zombie Death" 8 pgs.,

Continued on page 16

Much has been written about Hughes and ACG, which some fans have dubbed "The Little Giant" for its persistence and creativity. But those early issues of *Adventures into the Unknown!* remain clouded in the mists of the past, which is unfortunate because they are among the true gems of the 1948-52 period.

Hughes' decision to publish a horror comic was, to say the least, an inspired move. Scenes of horror and terror, of course, had been a staple of many comics books before then, but usually in connection with either crime stories or superheros Hughes created many of the superheros published by Standard/Better/Nedor, such as Black Terror and Fighting Yank, and many of these stories carried a horror element.

But to publish an entire book devoted to horror with a supernatural or weird slant . . . now that was truly a stroke of genius And Hughes was well aware of the historic nature of his undertaking (now, is that a bad pun, or what?!). In the house ad for *Adventures into the Unknown!* #1, Hughes plugs it as "For the first time...a magazine about ghosts!" A few years down the road, the top of the title read "America's first and greatest supernatural!", with the use of the word "supernatural" to mean an entire genre. This sort of self-conscious approach to the commercialization of comics was similar to the way Crestwood (Prize) used to banner *Young Romance* as the first of the romance titles (which it was).

At the time Hughes broke the horror barrier, the supernatural had pretty much vanished from other popular media. The first wave of talkie horror movies, which rose to great popularity in the early 1930s with Universal Pictures' earliest interpretations of *Dracula*, *Frankenstein* and *The Mummy*, ended when Universal temporarily abandoned the format in 1946 after producing dozens of entertaining fright films and inspiring companies such as Columbia to produce them, too. Nor was horror a staple of the relatively few remaining pulp magazines, the way it had been in the '30s

No, the source for horror in the 1948-54 period was the good old American comic book. Ironically, or maybe to fill a vacuum, not long after the Comics Code Authority killed off the horror comics in 1955, horror movies once again began to be wildly popular in both American and British formats. It is truly odd that during the brief heyday of horror comics (1948-54), horror virtually ceased to be a factor on the big screen

The accompanying index to the 52-page issues of *Adventures into the Unknown!* was created, in part, to provide a feel for what the comics contained. They usually carried five full-length stories plus a couple of shorts. There's no question the reader got his or her money's worth! There's also no question that this was a purely commercial venture, because most issues contained a vampire story, a werewolf story, a zombie tale, and so forth. There was never an "all vampire issue" or anything like that

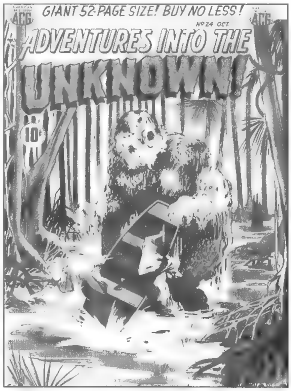
The first 30 issues are pictured in the *Gerber Photo-Journal*, along the "Tru-Vision" black-bordered issues from #51-58, so you can get a good idea of the mood these issues conveyed. The exclamation point was dropped when the logo was changed with #59, one of the last pre-code issues

The first 11 issues featured wonderful "mood" covers–in my opinion, some of the best ever to grace horror comics. I'm not sure who drew these covers, but they share the common theme of leaving what's really horrible about the situations to the reader's imagination. I love the covers to both #1 and #11, which are both variations on the Old Dark House theme. In my book, these are two of the most evocative covers in the entire history of comics. Who wouldn't want to read these comics?

If you have a *Photo-Journal* handy, study those first 11 covers for a few minutes. Every one of them will send chills down your back if you think about it long enough. They are also truly original–not one of them features the likes of a vampire, a zombie or a werewolf.

Of course, if you like covers featuring those three creatures of the night, the next 22 issues are your meat (pun fully intended but for which I freely apologize)

Ogden Whitney, who did so much fine work for ACG through the years, drew the covers for #12-30, and many of them are masterpieces of terror. They have a uniquely generic feel–there's nothing really original about them, and yet they are unlike anything on the market at the time



#11, (Jun/Jul 1950) Wouldn't this cover entice you into buying the comic book? This is typical of the title's early "mood" approach.

#24 (Oct 1951) Long before DC comics debuted The Swamp Thing, Ogden Whitney drew this cover of a similar creature. However, Hillman's Airboy Comics beat everyone to the swampy punch with "The Heap" in the 1940s.

Perhaps this is because these covers are, if nothing else, direct and to the point. My favorites are the vampire covers on #21 and

"World of Werewolves"
7 pgs., "The Vampire's Victim" 9 pgs.; "The Man Who Met His Own Ghost" 6 pgs

#21 (Jul 1951)
Cover by Whitney. Woman sees vampire in dressing table mirror; "Haunt from the Unknown" 6 pgs., "The Portrait Without a Soul" 9 pgs.; "The Zombies Prowl" 7 pgs.; "Uncanny Mysteries" 1 pg., "Journey into Madness" 7 pgs., "The Ghost Writer" 9 pgs

#22 (Aug 1951)
Cover by Whitney. Woman threatened by hands with scythe; "Witches' Wrath" 8 pgs.; "Fangs of Horror" 9 pgs., "Beliefs About Ghosts" 2 pgs.; "Magic Formula" 5 pgs., "True Ghost Tales–The Spectral Skater" 2 pgs.; "Vampire Valley" 9 pgs., "Uncanny Mysteries" 1 pg.; "The Voice of Death" 8 pgs

#23 (Sep 1951)
Cover by Whitney. Vampire bat flies over old dark house with woman., "Flight of the Dead" 8 pgs.; "The Thing That Lived Again" 10 pgs., "Shadow of the Wolf" 9 pgs.; "When Time Turned Back" 6 pgs., "The Ghostly Host" by Ogden Whitney 9 pgs

#24 (Oct 1951)
Cover by Whitney. Swamp Thing-type monster upends couple in boat; "The Spectral Sister" 8 pgs., "The Howling Hunters" 9 pgs., "Wings of Horror" 8 pgs.; "The Zombies' Disciple" 9 pgs., "The Spectral Show Window" 6 pgs., "Case of the Haunted Girl" 3 pgs

#25 (Nov 1951)
Cover by Whitney. Ghost of Frankenstein menaces couple; "The Weretiger of Assam" 10 pgs., "The Zombies' Eyes" 9 pgs., "The Spectral Pirate" 10 pgs.; "Assault from the Unknown" 9 pgs., "Uncanny Mysteries" 3 pgs., "True Ghosts of History" 1 pg

#26 (Dec 1951)
Cover by Whitney. Girl flees from puppeteer of death; "The Phantom Seeker" by Ogden Whitney 8 pgs., "The Holland Haunt" 9 pgs., "Wizard of Evil" 8 pgs., "The Werewolf Burial" 9 pgs., "True Tales of Sorcery" 3 pgs., "The Haunted Ghost" 6 pgs

#27 (Jan 1952)
Cover by Whitney. Vampire, grim reaper, zombie in graveyard; "The Lost Lives of Laura Hastings" by Williamson, Krenkel and probably Frazetta 8 pgs., "Dolls of Doom" 7 pgs.; "Warding Off Witches" 2 pgs., "The Shape of Evil" 9 pgs.; "True Ghosts of History" 1 pg., "The Buried Brain" by Ogden Whitney 7 pgs.; "The Citadel of Evil" 8 pgs

#28 (Feb 1952)
Cover by Whitney. Couple held by bony hand, "The Vampire's Prey" 8 pgs., "Demon of the Devil" 7 pgs.; "Satan's Sceptre" 5 pgs., "The Specter's Revenge" 7 pgs., "Double Vision!" 8 pgs., "The Hideous Head" 8 pgs

#29 (Mar 1952)
Cover by Whitney. Man held by dinosaur bones, "Invasion of the Ghost Monsters" 9 pgs., "Ship of Death" 9 pgs., "Mark of the Monster" 8 pgs., "The Hands of Darkness" 8 pgs.; "The Witches' Brew" 9 pgs

#30 (Apr 1952)
Cover by Whitney. Ghost of werewolf visits grave along with couple; "Haunt of the Hyena" 8 pgs., "Werewolf Valley" 8 pgs.; "Ghosts of History" 3 pgs., "The Ghouls Behind the Glass" 8 pgs., "Demon of the Deep" 8 pgs., "The Thing Without a Face" 8 pgs

#31 (May 1952)
Cover- Vampire bats menace pilot; "The Mask of Mumbo" 10 pgs., "The Wail of the Werewolf" 8 pgs., "True Ghosts Ships of History–The Flying Dutchman" 1 pg "Witch of the West" 8 pgs., "The Devil's Pact" 9 pgs., "The Ghost of Ashdowne House" 1 pg., "The Curse of the Ukpong" 8 pgs

#32 (Jun 1952)
Cover Plant monster menaces couple, "The Haunt of Evil!" 8 pgs., "The Faceless Legion" 8 pgs., "World of Weird" 8 pgs., "Beyond the Door of Death" 8 pgs., "Were-beasts Through History" 3 pgs., "The Crawling Corpse!" 8 pgs

#33 (Jul 1952)
Cover Woman trapped in web of spider with skeleton head, "When Werewolves Howl" 9 pgs., "True Ghosts of History" 1 pg., "The Monsters Strike!" 8 pgs., "True Ghosts of Antiquity" 1 pg., "The Girl Who Died Twice" 8 pgs., "Lair of Lost Souls" 8 pgs., "Uncanny Mysteries" 1 pg., "Fiend of Midnight" 8 pgs

#23, along with the classic Dracula-Grim Reaper-Zombie "greetings" cover on #27 (the issue with the story on which Al Williamson, Roy Krenkel and probably Frank Frazetta collaborated).

As far as the stories go, they're also almost totally generic, yet they have a depth of sincere feeling and a generally coherent plot not often seen in horror comics. And in story after story, the theme of "boy and girl battle supernatural evil" is common. Hughes could have called his comic Adventures into the Romantic Unknown! and he wouldn't have been far off. Story after story ends with lovers looking forward to a future together after whatever weirdness that had threatened them had been vanquished.

A few of the stories had downbeat endings, but those just usually weren't Hughes' style. One of the most touching stories ever to appear in a comic book–The Boy Who Could Fly! spices #9 (February/March 1950). In the story a boy sacrifices himself and joins his father in the great hereafter. It might seem kind of silly, but I defy you to read this story without shedding a tear. Anyone who has ever dreamed of flying–and haven't we all?–will relate to this story, which foreshadows the type of gentle and sometimes bittersweet post-code fables with which Hughes filled his 1955-67 issues.

Hughes seemingly wrote himself into the 5-page story "The Man in the Mirror," also in #9, in which he plays a sleuth of the supernatural who meets a horrible fate. Here's a hint: He's shown reading a copy of *Adventures into the Unknown!* with the letters reversed. As much work as Hughes did, it's likely that's the way the magazine sometimes seemed to him!

Hughes apparently loved vampire stories, so he filled his horror comics with them (don't forget, ACG also published the long-running *Forbidden Worlds* along with the 17-issue *Out of the Night*, the six-issue *Skeleton Hand* and the one-shot *Clutching Hand* titles)

In the first 33 issues of *Adventures into the Unknown!* alone, Hughes had fun with the following titles: "The Vampire Prowls" (#3), "Vampire's Castle" (#10), "The Vampire Vision" (#12), "The Vampire Swoops" (#13), "Vigil Among the Vampires" (#16), "The Vampire's Bane" (#19), "The Vampire's Victim" (#20), "Vampire Valley" (#22), and "The Vampire's Prey" (#28). And those are just the titles with "Vampire" in them.

If you don't think it isn't a feat to produce nine

story titles with the word "vampire" in about three years... well, try it sometime!

By the way, Al Feldstein, not long before he was to gain fame for his role in the birth of EC horror comics, has a nine-page story in #3 entitled "The Creekmore Curse". As far as I know, this is the only horror story he did for ACG.

Hughes also started something else unusual, though not unique, in comics at the time–a letters page! However, he usually ran only three or four letters per issue, and even those were only a paragraph or two. The late E. Nelson Bridwell, who served so long and admirably as an editor at DC Comics, may have made his professional writing debut with a letter in #8 (December 1949/January 1950), when he was 17.

Bridwell's name is the only one with recognition value of the 100 or so that appeared from #4 (the first letters column) through #33 (the letters column, of course, carried on right up to the end of the company).

The letters page was nothing if not commercial. Hughes' editorials rave about the stories of vampires, werewolves and zombies through the pre-code issues, then they do a 180-degree twist and talk about how much better the post-code stories are compared to those old, tired tales of vampires, werewolves and zombies!

I guess what I like about these stories is their combination of innocence and scary stuff–most of them read like grand adventures, not grisly confrontations with the supernatural. And most of them are not all that gory–another plus in my book. Much of the horror is left to the imagination, which is something of a lost art today.

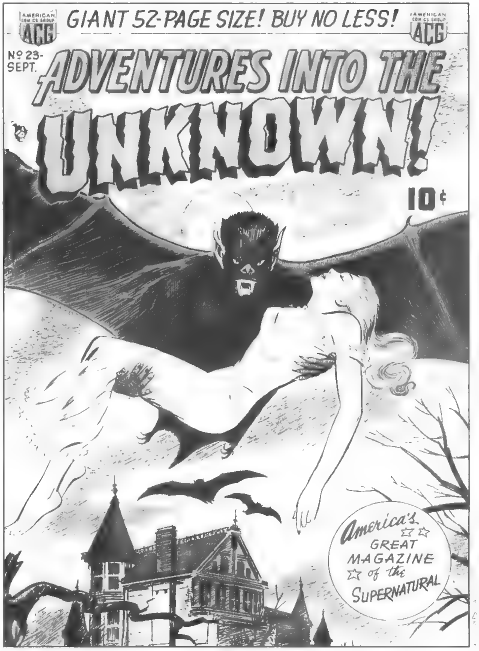
Gerber assigns #1 and #3 with a scarcity index of 6 (50 to 200 surviving copies) and the rest of the first 33 issues with 4s and 5s. There' s no doubt that the first three issues are pretty tough to find, especially in grade (in fact, high-grade issues of this title are extremely tough to find all the way down the line through about 1956). I'd say that's about right, but this is still a pretty tough set to put together, notwithstanding the prices.

In truth, *Adventures into the Unknown!* really is something of a generic horror comic, so maybe that's why it has been overlooked for so long, even by horror fans. Granted, EC did horror in a much more sophisticated way, and there's no question that *Adventures into the Unknown!* was designed for younger, or at least less sophisticated, readers.

But that should not diminish the significance of this title. It's probably a stretch to say that horror comics would not have developed without it, yet there's no denying its influence. Remember, most horror comics had not yet come into existence by the time *Adventures into the Unknown!* had reached its 10th issue in mid-1950. There's simply no question that this title enjoyed an influence far beyond that with which it is generally credited today

So, if you're looking for something entertaining to collect, get these while the prices are still not too... uh... horrible! ■

#23 (Sep 1951) Ogden Whitney drew this masterpiece of composition. Is there any element not present?



Michelle Nolan is a nationally recognized collector and researcher of comic books from the '40s through the '60s. In real life, Michelle works as a freelance journalist.

Action Comics
#30 GD/VG . . . $300
sp.roll looks nicer some water damage
#40 VG $225
sp roll, nice colors
#56 VG- $140
2"tear at btm fr.cover
#96 VF $500
small bit of writing ft. cvr
Adventure Comics
#41 VG+ $1,400
cvr cleaned, nice pgs.
#51 VG/FN . . $3,800
1st app. Starman.
Very minor c.t. at spine
All American
#61 VF- $3,500
1st Solomon Grundy
All Star Comics
#33 FN+ $1,350
Solomon Grundy cvr.
Andy Panda (4 Color)
#25 FN+ $300
#25 NM $600
#130 VF $90
#447 NM- $35
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Annette (4 Color)
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#1100 VF $135
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NM @ $80*
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16,17,18,
NM @ . . . . . $65 *
Astonishing
#17 FN $65 Aurora
Atom
#7 VF/NM $250
Avengers
#8 NM- $250*
Bambi (4 Color)
#12 VF $400*
#30 VF/NM . . .$600*
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#20 NM $280
Barney Google
(4 Color)
#40 NM- . . . . $275 *
Batman
#92 VG+ $150
Aurora
#234 NM- $125
Adams cvr/art
#244 VF/NM . . $25
Adams cvr/art
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Vol 2 #3 VF . . . $95
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#13 VG+ $65 Aurora
#15 FN+ $125 Aurora
#19 FN- $90 Aurora
#23 VG+ $45 Aurora
#26 FN+ $90 Aurora
Blaze Carson
#3 VG/FN $45 Aurora
Bozo
#3 VF/VF+ . . . $65
#3 NM $125*
#4 NM . . . . . $125 *
#5 VF+ . . . . .$150 *
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NM $185
#508 (4 Color)
NM . . . . . .$135 *
#551 (4 Color)
NM $135*
Bugs Bunny (4 Color)
#123 NM . . . . . $200 *
#420 VF . . . . .$54 *
#432 NM- . . . .$62 * ea
#498 VF $35*
#838 VF . . . . .$35 *
Bullwhide & Rocky (4 Color)
#1270 NM . . . .$225 *
Chamber of Chills
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w.s. staple area
#9 VG+ $40 Aurora
#11 VG+ Aurora
#12 VG+ $30 Aurora
#26 VG/FN $33 Aurora
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tear at cntrfold
#3 NM $50
Columbia Comics
#1 NN $200
Crime & Justice
#5 FN $25 Aurora
#14 FN- $35 Aurora
Crime Suspense Stories
#10 FN+ $175 Aurora
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#3 NM- . . . . .$220 *
#6 NM $230*
#11 NM . . . . . $230 *
#13 VF/NM . . . $220 *
#14,16,17,18,19
NM @ . . . . . $110.*
Danger Trail
#1 VF+ $950
Rare, dust shadow
fading on edge
#3 FN/VF $250
Rare, nice pgs.
not miscut
Danny Thomas Show (4 Color)
#1249 . . . . . $170*
Daredevil (S.A.)
#1 FN+ $450
Origin/1st app
ft. fading to ft. cvr.,
nice pgs.
#1 appt FN/VF $300
minor c.t. to cvr., tiny
m.c.
Daredevil Battles Hitler
#1 FR $880
complete cvr sp split
Dark Mysteries
#1 VF $500 Aurora,
tiny ch/p at btm ft. cvr.
Davy Crockett (4 Color)
#631 NM $175*
#639 VF/NM . . . $150 *
t.e. inside cvr
#664 VF $100*
#671 VF $100
Dell Giant
Bugs Bunny Halloween Fun
#4 VF+ . . . . . $200 *
Bugs Bunny Halloween Parade
#1 NM- $225*
Bugs Bunny Vacation Funnies
#1 FN+ $120
#6 VF . . . . . $140 *
Christmas Parade
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#7 NM- . . . . . $380 *
Donald Duck in Disneyland
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Uncle Donald...Dude Ranch
#52 VF/NM . . . $150 *
Huey, Dewey, Louie Back to School
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#35 Huey, Dewey, Louie NM- . . . . . $235 *
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VF- $200
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NM $200*
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Tom & Jerry Summer Fun
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Tom & Jerry Toy Fair
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Tom & Jerry Winter Carnival
#1 VF/NM $425*
Tom & Jerry Winter Fun
#3 VF+ . . . . . $140 *
#4 NM- . . . . . $135 *
#5 NM+ . . . . . $150 *
#6 NM . . . . . $150 *
Treasury of Dogs
#1 VF $50*
Vacation in Disneyland
#1 NM . . . . . $325 *
Vacation Parade
#3 NM $400*
#5 NM . . . . . $400 *
Woody,Woodpecker Back to School
#1 NM . . . . . $300 *
#2 NM . . . . . $210 *
#3 NM- $200*
#6 NM $150 * has ws
Woody,Woodpecker Country Fair #2 NM $180*
Detective Comics
#32 VG+ $1,750 Deep colors w/off-whit. pgs., rust at staples, good looking book!
#34 VF $3,000
cvr, cleaned, 3 tiear seals,
Great copy w/wht. pgs
#36 FN - . . . $2,700
1st Hugo Strange, cover, cleaned
#37 FN/VF $3700
cvr, cleaned w/ spine split seal at top & btm
nice interior pgs
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1st Clayface &
1st Joker cvr
mod. rest. to cvr.,
nice pgs.
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#34 VF+ $390
tan edge inside cvr.
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"Terror of the River"
#159 VF $600
"Ghost in the Grotto"
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art, date stamp, ft. cvr.
#318 VF $250
"No Such Varmit"
#394 NM- $250*
#1140 NM- . . . . $65 *
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Merry Christmas
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t. stain top cm. ft. cvr.
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#693 NM- $105
#668 VF/NM . . . $60
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Fairy Godmothers (4 Color)
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Felix the Cat (4 Color)
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#119 NM- $425*
#135 NM- . . . .$300 *
#2 VF+ $110
Flame
#3 VG- $225
Lou Fine cvr/art
tear on last page
Flash
#104 VG+ $2,500
#129 VF+ $295
white pgs. 1st J.S.A.
Flash Gordon (4 Color)
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Battle issue
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#9 VF+ $140*
#10 NM $200*
#11 FN/VF $60*
#12 NM- $125*
#13 NM $150*
#14 NM- $125*
#15,16,17
NM @ . . . . . $150 *
#18 FN+ $50
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w.s. top cnr.
#26 VG $65 Aurora
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#220 VF $120
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tan pgs.
Phantom Lady
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Aurora nice pgs.
#22 VG+ $350
Aurora, w.s. at spine tears top of book.
Phantom Stranger (1st)
#2 FN+ $425
Aurora, wht. pgs.
w/deep colors
#3 VG/FN $350
Aurora sml chip at top ft cvr
#6 VG $225
Aurora, scarce last issue
Plastic Man
#63 VG+ $35
Aurora
Popeye
#1 (1948) VF+ $325
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#53 FN+... $50 Aurora
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#956 VF+ $200
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#1275 NM $300*
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#8 App FN $200
2nd SA App The Flash
Mod.ct to cvr
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#99 NM $150
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sm piece tape inside fr
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TFN+ . . . . . $75 Aurora
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#11,12,13
NM @ . . . . . $90 *
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#21 NM $75*
#22 NM $85*
#23,24
VF+ @ . . . . . $55 *
#27 NM- $65*
#31,35, ... 36
NM @ $65* . . .
#37 NM- $55*
#39,39,41
NM @ . . . . . $65 *
#44 NM- $55*
#47,54 NM @ . . $65 *
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#71 NM $650
Xela airbrush
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#55 NM- $150*
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#150 VF+ $100*
Tom Mix Western
#5 NM $275
#7 NM- $210
#12 VF $100
name on cvr
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Torchy
#1 GD/VG $250
Cand an edition
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Wash Tubbs (4 Color)
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Pgs. brittle at spine

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Johnny Dynamite

"The four of them worked me over good. They laughed as I lay there coughing up my guts. Somehow I got hold of a gun. They stopped laughing... fast."

A quote from a Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer novel? Nope. Maybe a line from Frank Miller's brilliant tough guy comic, *Sin City*? Or David Lapham's collectable independent title, *Stray Bullets*? You may be surprised to learn that while the above quote is from a comic book, it's not a current comic book, but a near forgotten pre-code comic book series starring Johnny Dynamite. He was the toughest of the many comic book PIs who strutted their stuff in the early 1950s, until the Comics Code came along and emasculated the medium for the next 30 years or more

Nowadays, lucky comic book readers can enjoy a wide variety of genre fiction in four-color form, including crime comics and private eye noir series like the abovementioned, or *Nowheresville*, *Armed & Dangerous*, *The Grackle*, or Dynamite's true spiritual spawn, Max Allan Collins' and Mickey Spillane's *Mike Danger*. Right now, comics are enjoying the biggest boom in hardboiled comics since the heyday of the 1950s, when pre-code comic books offered a wellspring of adult reading, presumably because back then, adults still read comic books. Guys who were recently back from war duty (WWII or the Korean war) had been weaned on Batman and Superman, and were now reading *Crime Does Not Pay*, or the even better, *Crime*

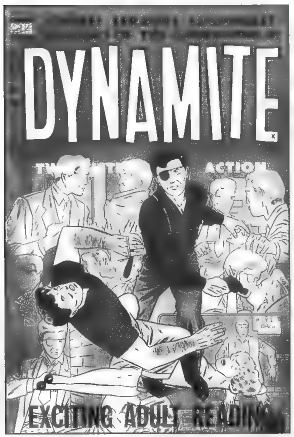
By Jeff Gelb

SuspenStories. And if they read books, it was probably Mike Hammer paperbacks by Mickey Spillane, himself a former comic book scribe. So it was a short hop from Hammer to Dynamite, and while JD never made it to the big leagues as Hammer did (and still does), Dynamite has proven to be surprisingly resilient.

Dynamite #9 (Sep 1954) Pete Morisi came up with a clever idea, using three solid figures for the foreground and "ghost" outlines for the background, on this cover that promises "exciting adult reading".

Johnny Dynamite #12 (Oct 1955) This is the last issue of three in which new publisher Charlton attempted to tame the Chicago wild man to conform to the Comics Code. It just couldn't be done...

"I grabbed the sap and headed for the little guy who was still trying to get off a shot at me. I let him look at the sap a split second before I brought it down full force across his blubbering face. He moaned as the flesh was laid open to the bone, and fell in a stupor as his teeth crumpled under the impact."

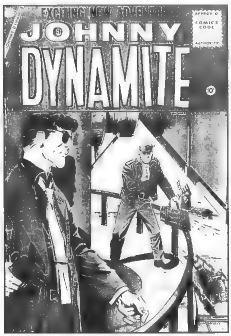


As a lifelong fan of both comics and tough guy Private Eye fiction, when I discovered Johnny Dynamite, and his namesake comic book of the '50s, I thought I'd died and gone to PI heaven. Here, finally, was a comic just as tough as the wonderfully gritty Mike Hammer novels. It was all there, the first person narrative, the gangsters, guns, dames, and danger. And it was not only well written by someone who obviously had read and enjoyed Spillane, it was beautifully drawn.

Johnny Dynamite was the co-creation of writer Ken Fitch, slumming under the pseudonym of William Waugh, and artist Pete Morisi. Fitch was a veteran comics scripter of long standing who probably relished the opportunity to write adult material after writing reams of comic book stories for such characters as Woody Woodpecker and Little Eightball. Morisi brought an equally interesting background to his work as a comics artist, for he was a former policeman. His totally unique illustrative style was reminiscent of police crime scene photos. His images captured the stories' most brutal moments at their zenith.

Morisi came to *Dynamite* following a short stint illustrating crime and western comics for a number of publishers. While he started only as illustrator for *Dynamite*, by the end of the Comic Media run, he was also writing many of the stories, in just as hardboiled a fashion as Fitch/Waugh could muster. In fact, the longest story in the *Dynamite* canon was a 13-page tale in #9 that was written and drawn by Morisi. (In later times, Morisi would create, write, and illustrate the Adventures of Thunderbolt, one of Charlton's best action heroes of the '60s.)

"Outta my way, ya #!@*#!!"



Readers of *Dynamite* were treated to tales of femme fatales, gangsters who swore bloody vengeance on Johnny for putting their crime cohorts in jail, sweet prostitutes, and a surprisingly high number of stories involving narcotics, usually heroin. In other words, pretty adult stuff, especially for the comic book marketplace. And through it all strode Johnny, eye patch and all, fists flying, mouth screaming swear words (or the comics' equivalent of them, which meant strange little combinations of typewriter symbols like "#" and "*"). He was not tremendously bright but he was too big to ignore and bound to stumble on the right answer after getting beat up or tortured a bit (or a lot) by the bad guys. Most stories ended with said villains D.O.A. That's the kind of comic *Johnny Dynamite* was. The only crime comic more adult in the marketplace at the time was EC's *Crime SuspenStories*, but that wonderful title was usually reserved for James M. Cain-type tales of mar-

riages gone bad and husbands or wives plotting the deaths of their spouses. Dynamite, on the other hand, was a flat-out "PI Against Crime" comic. And with Morisi's in-your-face art, it became even more startling in its sense of hyper-reality, as only the best pulp fiction can create.

"The big guy... the one that kicked me... he'd get that back... in spades!"

Johnny Dynamite was the best title in the small but potent Comic Media stable, which also included such horror titles as *Horrific* and *Terrific* (as in Terror-ific), which sported tremendously ghoulish cover art by then-neophyte Don Heck, who looked like he was having a "heck" of a good time illustrating giant pictures of guys with bullet holes in their foreheads. They weren't great comics but they were in your face, and with '50s comics publishers facing the dual onslaught of movies and TV, they had to do something to get the readers' attention, or lose it forever. Those Heck covers must have stood out on the comic racks like whores in a nunnery. Understandably, the Comics Media horror output has gone way up in collector value in recent years.

The *Dynamite* issues can still be had reasonably cheap, at least in lesser conditions. The title lasted just six issues in 1953 and 1954, and then the comics market crashed with the advent of the Comics Code, which blew all the horror titles off the comics racks like a hurricane blowing the leaves off trees. Amazingly, Johnny Dynamite survived the near-genocide of the crime and horror comics field, but in a sadly emasculated fashion and via another publisher, Charlton. That company was never known for quality work, and their version of Johnny turned him into a poorly illustrated PI whose stories were just thinly-veiled morality plays. When three issues in 1955 proved that those kinds of stories didn't work, Charlton tried on a foreign agent hat for Johnny in a title called Foreign Intrigue, which also lasted three lackluster issues in 1956 before sputtering out of gas.

"My love is dead, Johnny, but I'm still alive, and gratitude can take the place of love. If you find the killer I'll be yours whenever you want me."

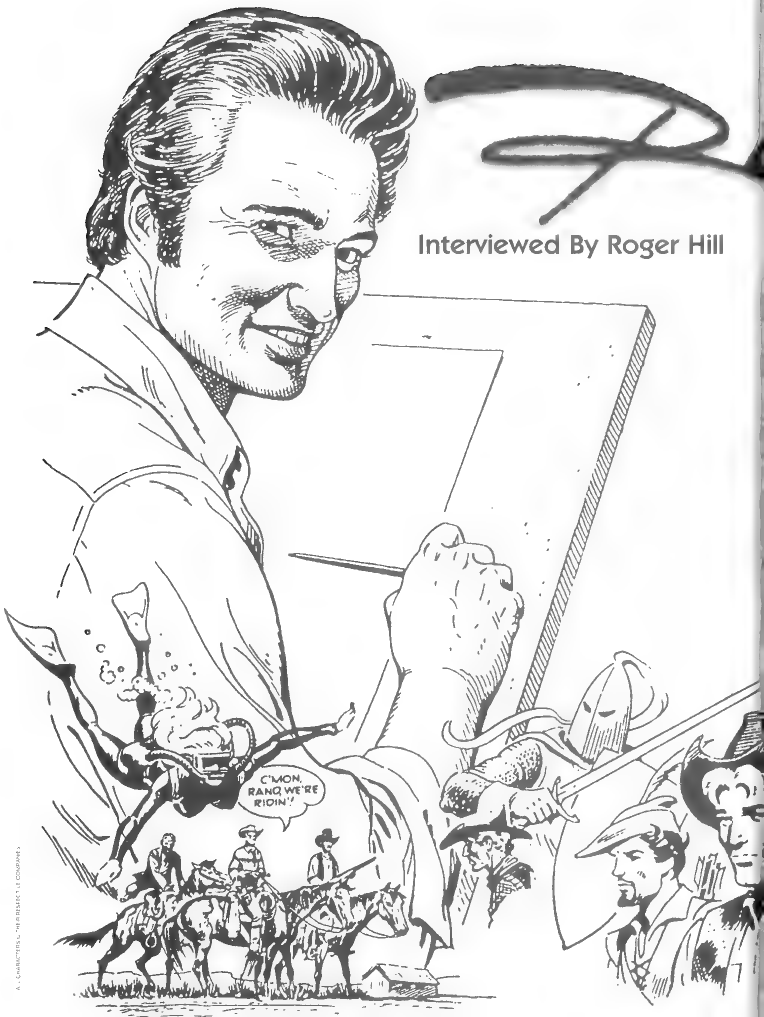
And there's where our story might have ended, except that other people fell in love with Johnny, and one of them was Max Allan Collins. Aside from being a prolific, award-winning writer of hardboiled prose fiction, Collins has had an abiding interest in comic strips and books. Aside from a decade-plus as the excellent writer of the Dick Tracy comic strip, Collins has also penned dozens of stories for DC Comics, from Batman to Wild Dog. But his most famous comics work is of his distaff PI creation, *Ms. Tree*, whose 50 plus issue run for several publishers set the noirish mood for the crime comics explosion of the '90s

COMICS MEDIA
MAY
DYNAMITE 7
MEET THE CHICAGO WILD MAN!
DYNAMITE
MEET JOHNNY DYNAMITE
THE ONE-EYED PRIVATE EYE!
HE'S ROUGH! HE'S TOUGH! HE'S DYNAMITE!
FLASH!
JOHNNY DYNAMITE SWORE THERE WOULD BE FOUR CORPSES BEFORE HE SOLVED THE CASE-- AND HE KEPT HIS WORD. DON'T MISS--

(and receives too little credit for it). When the burden of producing *Tree* on a monthly basis became too heavy for the busy Collins and co-creator/artist Terry Beatty, they cut down the *Tree* story lengths and looked for suitable reprint material to fill up the issues. It was then that Collins, a lifelong comics collector, recalled the great *Johnny Dynamite* comics of the '50s. Collins enthused, "Morisi's Johnny Dynamite was the best unofficial version of Mike Hammer that had been done in comics, even topping Spillane's own (comic strip) version. I loved the combination of Morisi's very clear art with the gritty over-the-top pulp action and vengeance theme from Spillane that was so vividly used."

So Collins and Beatty took a suc- *continued on page 62*

Dynamite #7 (May 1954). This is one of Morisi's best cover packages, featuring "Vendetta", the thirteen-page hard-boiled story for which Pete provided the script and the art.



Interviewed By Roger Hill

RUSS HEATH

Interviewer's note: *As most serious collectors know, Russ Heath is one of the great names in the comic book industry. Although most renowned for his work in DC's* Brave & Bold, Sea Devils, *and numerous classic war stories, Russ Heath has made many other wonderful contributions to comic book history. The following interview (originally conducted during the early months of 1987) provides a rare glimpse into Russ' lesser known work… and many of the artistic greats that the inimitable Heath has worked with along the way. As 1997 marks Russ Heath's 50th anniversary in comics, it is a privilege for me to share the insights, information, and history that follows!*

ROGER HILL: *To start off with Russ, I thought I might get a little background first. Where were you born and raised?*

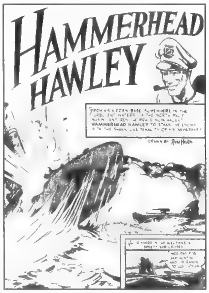
RUSS HEATH: Upper Montclair, New Jersey. I went off to the Air Force, came back, went back to high school, then got married and started a family.

ROGER: *Hadn't you started in the comics before you went into the Air Force?*

RUSS: Yes. I started during the Summer. My father said he heard of somebody who could use some assistance… you know, a friend of a friend and so on. So I went and met this guy. That was when I first discovered that comics were not done in pen and ink, they were done in brush and ink. So the guy gave me several brushes and sent me home to practice.

ROGER: *Who was this guy that got you started?*

RUSS: I'm not sure… I don't really remember but I'm guessing Charles Quinlan. Anyway, he was doing Catman or Catwoman or something like that. He needed this little fill in feature done and so I pencilled and inked it. During the Summer I could do, maybe, two jobs. That feature was called Hammerhead Hawley. It was about a guy who had a midget submarine. In every story he would go out and sink half the Japanese Navy. He had an African-American cohort with him, which was interesting for 1943. It appeared in *Captain Aero Comics*



ROGER: *Before all this happened, I would assume that you had an interest in some form of art?*

RUSS: I was nuts over comics… syndicated comics … and comic books. I had done my own comics in High School. I guess most every artist who loved comics did their own in high school. I had them hanging up on the walls at school.

ROGER: *So you had started buying comics probably in the mid '30s?*

RUSS: I remember I bought the eleventh issue of *Famous Funnies* in Florida when I was about seven years old. That was the first comic book I'd ever seen.

ROGER: *When you took on this job for Quinlan, did you work up in the Holyoke offices?*

RUSS: No, I worked at home. I'm not sure now if it was all in one summer or two. I know it was at least two jobs, because two separate comics issued stories in them that I worked on. I had copies of them around for a long time. This was in mid 1943.

ROGER: *With World War II in full swing at the time, did you get drafted?*

RUSS: No. Of course at that time the sentiments were that everybody wanted to get in and do their bit. You know, we'd been attacked and the thinking then was that everybody should go and do their bit.

I wanted to go up to Canada because they would take you at seventeen in the RCAF. They had what they called the accelerated

course… that is, finish school and join your own air force. So they persuaded me to do that (finish school), which meant I would leave a year later… which may have saved my life.

I joined the U.S. Air Force in the hope of being trained as a fighter pilot. During basic training, Germany surrendered and it became apparent to the people in power that perhaps they weren't going to need 60,000 first lieutenant aviators. So they put us on hold while they thought it over. Some of the guys

Russ Heath greets fans at the Kansas City Comic Con in 1993.

had already finished about 85 days of basic training. Then Japan surrendered and they knew damn well they weren't going to need all these aviators.

After a week of K.P., I decided this was for the birds and got a job on the camp newspaper doing cartoons. Then they decided that since it was a contract and we hadn't kept our part, the only fair thing to do was to let us out of the service.

ROGER: *So when they let you out in 1945, what happened next? Did you start freelancing, or go back to see Quinlan?*

RUSS: To my knowledge, Quinlan wasn't around by then. So I just started looking for other work… not just in the comic field either. I started looking at ad agencies. I wanted to be an illustrator. So I had a book of samples and I started pounding the pavement from 10 AM until 4 PM every day. Those were the only hours that anybody would interview you.

ROGER: *Had you ever attended any art schools up to this point or were you pretty much self-taught?*

RUSS: I started the Famous Artists course but never did anything with it. The course just sort of dribbled off after a while.

ROGER: *So you were pounding the pavements of New York…*

RUSS: Right. In those days it was quite interesting. You could look up famous illustrators who worked in the city and call them up on the phone… and even wind up going over to talk to them. I went the whole gamut. I even went to Philadelphia to *The Saturday Evening Post* and was ushered right in off the streets.

ROGER: *Who were some of the artists you talked to back then?*

RUSS: Oh let's see . Fred Ludikins, Albert Dorne. Dorne's place was very impressive. He had this 40 foot room with 40 foot ceilings and one 40 foot window that let this beam of light come in. I mean there was nothing else in the whole bloody room, except him and his desk and he's sitting in a Christ-like setting. When you walked in there, you really got a feeling that this was someone significant.

Heck, you can't believe the people I was able to see. Everywhere I'd go, I'd get three suggestions, so my referral book just kept getting bigger. Then I started repeats on some of them because they'd tell me to come back in a month.

The '40s was a time period when most of the great illustrators were still alive and living in New York… and they didn't all have secretaries back then to keep people out.

I always liked Bob Kuhn's work. I used to cut his stuff out. Marvelous dry brush work. But a lot of the illustrators I came to know were the ones from *The Saturday Evening Post*

A quartet of Heath-drawn Atlas covers… **War Adventures #9, Astonishing #19, Western Outlaws #3,** and **Lorna, The Jungle Girl #7.**

Spellbound #20 (Apr 1954) – The original art shown here is one of the few surviving examples of a pre-Code Atlas horror cover and features Heath's famous "tentacles in the graveyard" scene.

"Give and Take", Heath's incredible masterpiece of war art, is the quintessential example of the "wash" technique.

Also I liked the work of guys like John Clymer who did marvelous *Post* covers and illustrations. Harold Von Schmidt was another one I used to love his covers. Of course I even came to like a lot of Norman Rockwell... his stuff knocked you out by the technical excellence of it.

I subscribed to *Look, Colliers, Saturday Evening Post, Life, Argosy* and *True*. I liked John Wickham, with all the girlie stuff from *Cosmopolitan* too. Clymer did a lot of stuff for *Argosy*. I was cutting it all out and saving it.

Anyway, so I'm still pounding the streets of New York, not specifically looking for comic work. I think I walked the pavements for a year before I got anything. I wound up at Benton & Bowles Advertising Agency. They took me on as a matte cutter and general handyman... sharpening pencils for art directors and so on. I'd go down to the office and sharpen all the pencils at the beginning of each day. I also took care of the stocks of art supplies. I cut mattes... and I also learned about doing paste-ups.

Benton & Bowles Advertising paid $35 a week. I discovered that $15 of that went for laundry because you still wore suits in those days. There was also the bus fare from New Jersey to New York. My wife and I were living with my folks at the time because I didn't have a dime to start with.

So I started looking for another job during the only time available to look ... during my lunch hour. After a while I went over to Timely and there was Stan Lee. So Stan Lee says, "Well, we'll give you $70 a week right here... and you can start right away". I went home and said, "Hey, I just doubled my salary." So that was my introduction to Stan Lee.

I think Martin Goodman had put Stan in there at 18, and

ART, TEXTS & THEIR RIGHTS

of course I came along a few years after that. Also, I met Harvey Kurtzman for the first time up there. He was bringing in his "Hey Look" pages.

ROGER: *What year did you start to work for Stan?*

RUSS: I would say it was around 1947.

ROGER: *Which titles were you first assigned to work on?*

RUSS: Oh, let's see. *Two Gun Kid* was one, followed by *The Arizona Kid*. There were all kinds of short titles. They stuck me exclusively on westerns because that was my forte at the time. I guess half my portfolio showed that too. Eventually I did almost anything. I never got into the romance much, but I did one or two. I know I did an issue of the *Human Torch*. I had forgotten that I'd ever done that title until someone looked them up and found that I had done one. There were probably a few other little one story things like that which I've long since forgotten.

Shortly after that I started doing occasional jobs for Harvey Kurtzman at EC. I think I did something in the first issue of *Frontline Combat*. Occasionally, I worked in an art studio in New York doing little spots. There's all kinds of little stuff I did along the way that I don't remember the chronological order of anymore. It seemed that through the years at Timely, the comic book business went up and down at times... when it was down I'd look around for work elsewhere. When the *Mighty Mouse 3-D* came out, that's when I was out looking for work. During that period, I worked on the *3-D Tor* book with Joe Kubert. I worked on a lot, plus then I did some single page fillers by myself. I guess there were several 3-D books that came out before the whole thing went to pieces.

That's when I met Norman Maurer, who just died a while back. He was probably Joe Kubert's closest friend.

ROGER: *The job you mentioned in* Frontline Combat *#1. It was called O. P. (Observation Post).*

RUSS: Yes, Harvey K. laid it out.

ROGER: *What did you think of Harvey's layouts?*

RUSS: Oh, I loved them. In fact, I'm sure some of his style even came out in my drawings.

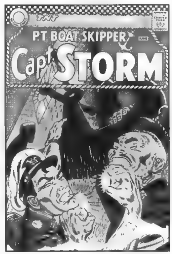
ROGER: *I was just looking at it again earlier and one particular sequence caught my eye. There's this row of four panels at the bottom of page five which shows all the big cannons shooting and you got the big sound effects lettering, running, across each panel. Very typically Kurtzman, I thought.*

RUSS: Yes. There was practically no effort made for authenticity. Those things look like the guns that shoot puffed rice or something. *(Continued on page 66)*

All panels are from Blazing Combat #4 (Jul 1966). Art by Russ Heath, script by Archie Goodwin.

Heath donned helmet and uniform and posed for photos used to draw the characters... hence, all the soldiers in the story resemble the artist.

The PT Boat Skipper...



ALL COVERS © 1997 DC

Captain Storm

You can never condone war nor the brutality it delivers, but during the '60s, W.W.II still held close memories. Not only for the tragedy it brought, but for the victories that brought it to an end. My part on Saturday and Sunday, with "Mattel" tommy gun in hand, delivered a lot of extra casualties to the Axis powers. Gunner and Sarge, Jeb Stuart or Sgt. Rock would have been proud. But May, 1964 brought a new hero, a wooden legged Navy Lt. on a fast moving "mosquito boat". Twin 50's, (50 caliber machine guns) and V-12 engines gave you action and lots of it. Great war action was so much a part of the DC. Big Five tradition, yet PT Boat Skipper, Captain Storm seems to have fallen into a void. With art work by Kubert, Heath, Andru and Esposito, Novick and Abel, a classic washtone (#8) and editing by Kanigher, this 18 book series has DC tradition. Plus, it's not a series that came late, running from 1964 through 1967.

A parallel of RAF pilot, Doug Bader, who returned to action WW II after being wounded, and the relentless revenge of Captain Ahab in the search for Moby Dick, Captain Storm is always hunting the "killer sub" that sunk and killed his first crew (also giving Captain Storm his wooden leg). Each patrol usually included sinking a tin-can, sub, carrier, three or four planes and a gun in placement on the beach. The 78 foot Higgens (PT 47) may have been plywood, but it packed a deadly punch (the deck included notches into which Captain Storm's wooden leg fit). And yet, like Johnny Cloud, who never seemed to return in the same plane he left, PT 47 does get recommissioned almost on a regular basis.

If you crave real action in a comic book, pick up issue #13... it has a cover by Andru and Esposito and great Joe Kubert art inside. On an island, Captain Storm meets Gunner, Sarge, and Pooch, has trouble with pesky snipers, then gets saved by the "Devil Dog" Lt. Rock, but the story hasn't ended. Now Storm finds and sinks what he believes to be the killer sub he's been hunting. Only later (issue #18) does he find out there is an entire squadron of subs with the same killer shark insignia, convincing him that he will never know which sub killed his first crew. By now he's lost so many crew members and PT boats, that he probably should just get over it.

Pre-development also makes Captain Storm a DC war member. *Our Fighting Forces* #76 (May 1963) has a great proto-story of a Lt. stuck on a small, "expendable" PT 27. The lead story is about Gunner and Sarge, but the cover (by Kubert) illustrates the last story (also drawn by Kubert) "No Place For A PT Boat". The action is Captain Storm all the way, with different names. Something else that should catch your eye, is the total non-similarity the cover has to the story. There are no enemy frogmen, no enemy sub, and the PT boat skipper isn't wearing scuba gear. It's one of those "detail" things that still gives you a great cover and story even though they don't match. Captain Storm would also show up later in *Our Fighting Forces* #95 (October 1965) be mentioned in *Our Fighting Forces* #104 (November 1966), and be one of the "Losers" starting in *Our Fighting Forces* #123 (January 1969).

Captain Storm is a "Big Fiver's" dream come true. What doesn't it have? Let's not get carried away saying it should now be called the "BIG SIX". But when you talk of Rock, Hunter, Enemy Ace or Pooch, weigh anchor and include Captain Storm. They were known as the "expendable fleet", but PT 47 always delivered the goods and sank some too...

Johnny Cloud

Unfortunately machines of war were designed with one purpose. to cause as much destruction as possible Even though advancements in technology are end results of war (especially W.W. II), their original design was to efficiently kill. It's a sad system that takes one to reach the other. I don't remember exactly where or when I saw a picture of one for the first time, but I was hooked. The way it sat up with its nose in the air. The four bladed prop and the distinctive underbelly design I knew, whether it was or not, that this had to be the best fighter plane of W.W. II. the P-51d Mustang With its six Browning 50 cal. guns and a Packard built Rolls Royce engine, it roared with versatility making it one of the best over-all designs. Late in the war when the enemy ME262 started to appear, a sleek twin engine "jet", the Mustang answered the call (the best a piston fighter could do against a jet). Mustang pilots became "Aces in a Day" in some cases, and held their own against the new jet fighters. Fortunately the new "jet threat" never materialized in force and the P-51 Mustang commanded a near 3:1 kill ratio over enemy fighters.

As with any well-designed machine, you must have someone to operate it. This would be a pilot, and not just any pilot, this was Johnny Cloud, The Navajo Ace Courage and honor made Johnny a great fighter pilot. Besides fighting battles in the sky, he also faced a few within himself Always having to defend his true native heritage, he often had to make sacrifices to please those with stereotypes of Native Americans. He also had to deal with the "Cloudmaker", who's spiritual visions always had Johnny worried about when or where these visions would come true. Plus his "Big Brother" in the sky, who's honor to uphold put pressure on Johnny as well. If you put all of these obstacles together, not to mention always being out-numbered, you might have an idea as to why Johnny was always being shot down. Cover after cover shows a parachuting Lt. Cloud, while his well-designed Mustang falls in flames (with such frequent use, parachute manufacturers must have had to step up production). Even Mr. Irv Novick himself confessed that maybe Johnny just wasn't a very good pilot! But I don't think Mr. Novick really thought Johnny was a terrible pilot, only that the obstacles he faced might have made him appear that way Fortunately, he possessed the skills, honor, and courage to overcome those pressures which is what made Johnny Cloud a real Navajo American Ace

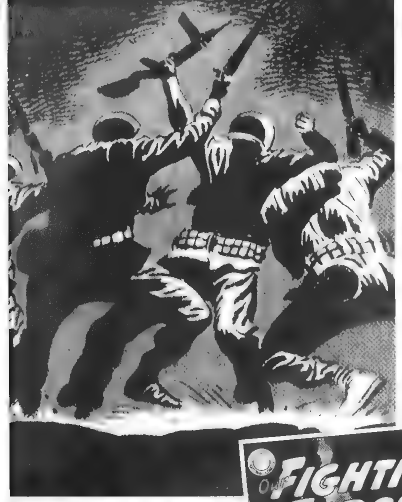
By now you know we're describing *All American Men of War*, another solid example of DC's "Big Five" war books. *All American Men of War* is home for Johnny Cloud beginning with his introduction in issue #82. This is my favorite Irv Novick work, who also does a great job with Johnny throughout the series Issue #85, for example, has Mr. Novick's art inside, but the cover is done by Russ Heath. Just look at this cover. The detail of Johnny's headgear and face, the canopy and background sky, the two enemy fighters coming at you, all of this alone gives you your 10¢ worth. Issue #102 also contains Mr. Novick's work, but the cover is Joe Kubert's first Johnny Cloud.

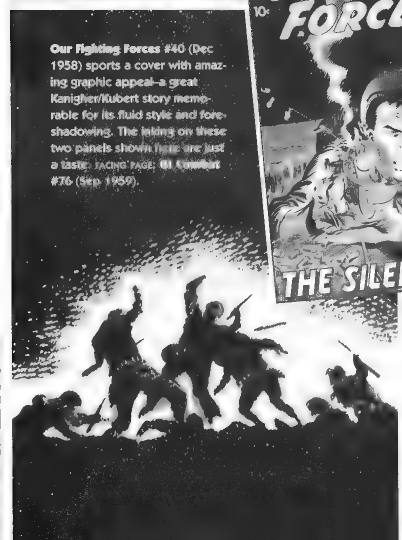
In this class DC war series we have the best overall fighter of W.W.II, the P-51d Mustang; the best pilot, who not only can fly the Mustang, but serves up a "punch" while jumping out of it (still possessing the courage and honor of a true Ace); and work of perfection by greats like Novick, Heath, and Kubert

Finally, throw into the mix the writing of the legendary Kanigher… and the result is incredible Silver Age classics filled with "character", strength, and the "personal feel" found only in *All-American Men of War*'s Johnny Cloud,. Navajo Ace! ■

By Larry Thomas

and the Navajo Ace





Our Fighting Forces #40 (Dec 1958) sports a cover with amazing graphic appeal–a great Kanigher/Kubert story memorable for its fluid style and foreshadowing. The inking on these two panels shown here are just a taste. FACING PAGE: **GI Combat** #76 (Sep 1959).

THE BEST OF DC WAR

One of the primary reasons for collecting comic books has always been aesthetic appreciation. Sure, getting the first appearance of a popular character is always nice, but if you're a true devotee of the medium, you'll consider any book which contains your favorite art or story a key find. There's been an awful lot of buzz lately about war books and people have been jumping into this genre of collecting with seemingly hopeless abandon… on their endless quest to discover the next "hot" genre. Well, for anybody who wants to understand why people were ever attracted to those "Big-5" war books in the first place, one may need to step back from the mania surrounding this currently popular genre and look a little more closely when the dust has settled.

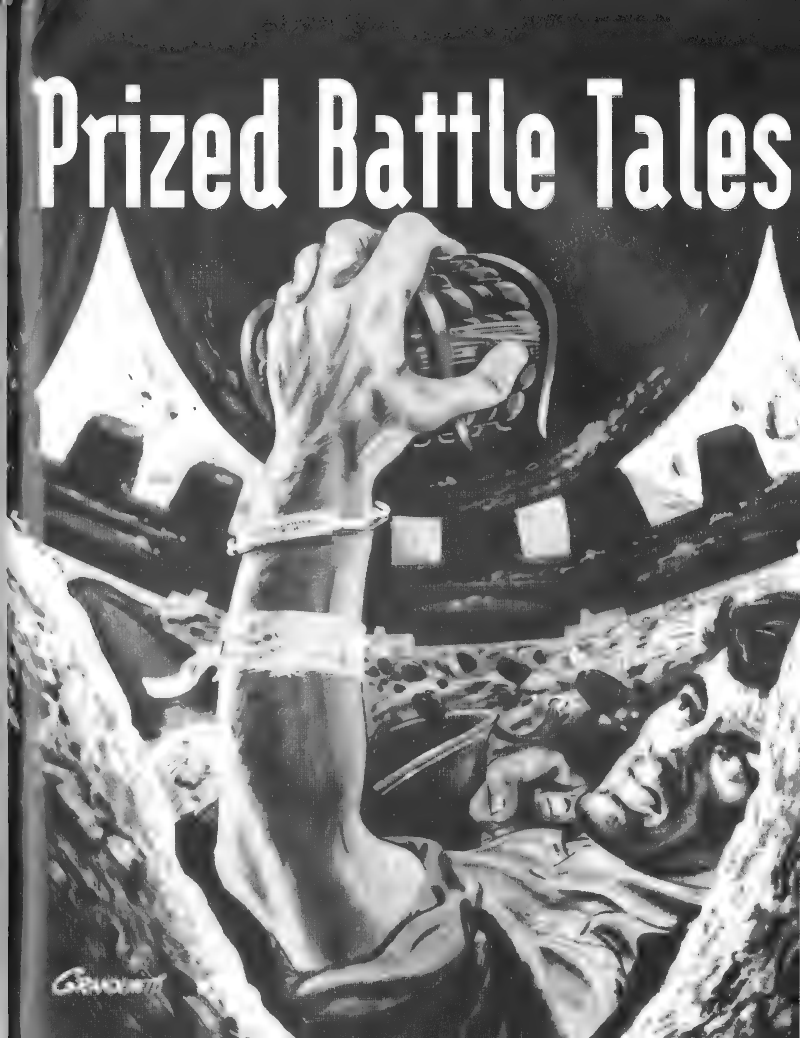
The superhero and character related books will always be popular because of the draw of one continuing character or another; but what if the title or genre has no continuing characters of note? Would anybody care about picking up a comic unless it had a familiar character to carry the plot? Many people would answer negatively, but I feel that the charm of the war books–the hook [which will outlast the current speculation] reeling in most hard-core "DC Big-5ers"–is the high quality of the work which went into producing the comics. To be sure, many of the superhero titles had artists of note: Infantino, Anderson, Kane, Swan, Ditko, and Kirby to name the big ones, but few would argue that the war comics stable–as led by editor/writer Bob Kanigher–had nothing short of a superb concentration of fantastic artists. The objective here is to share an appreciation of the art and writing which went into the creation of some of the greatest work that DC published under the Big-5 banner and to spotlight some of the underappreciated gems. It should be noted that all war books contained more than one story (sometimes up to five), and that the focus will be on the particularly strong assets of the books mentioned.

"PRE-ROCK" ERA

There are those who would argue over the beginning or ending, of a particular era, but for the sake of simplicity, I have chosen three time periods for war books. The first era is the "Pre-Rock" era–from August 1952 to about June of 1959. During this era, the said concentration of great artists was at its highest. War books were popular during this period of time, but they still had to compete against titles or genres with familiar characters. As fate would have it (or as Bob Kanigher, the Big-5 editor would have it), some of the most outstanding artwork and stories are collected in many of these comics. In truth, some of the stories were quite wretched or cliché–rifles as narrators, throwing a

BY NICK RABIN

Prized Battle Tales



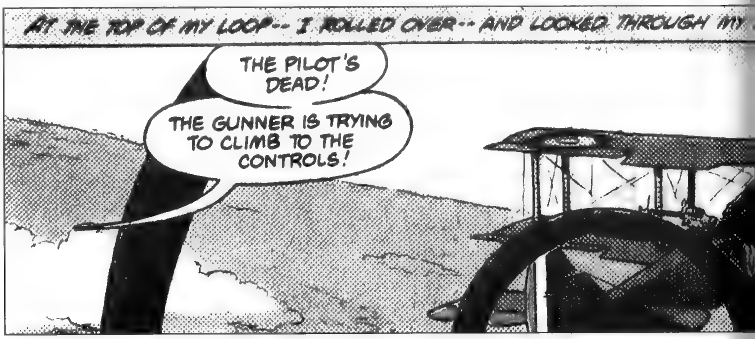
grenade and flashing back to high school football–but other plots transcended the cliché becoming classics of mood and expression.

Our Fighting Forces #40 (December, 1958) is a particularly solid book. The cover alone is worth the price of admission... a marine firing off rounds with his rifle as his foxhole fills with water. The chiaroscuro effect is maximized with a glow on the soldier's face juxtaposed against a black sky. The Kubert face typically expresses volumes and is only an enticement for what is contained within. Stories abound in the Big-5 with war buddies being lost only to be reunited at the end. This exceptional Kanigher/Kubert collaboration is made considerably grimmer when the two characters (speculating about the kinds of circumstances which lead to soldiers stoically becoming "silent") suddenly get blown out of the water and the easygoing dialogue is yanked as only one survives the blast and only his thoughts are there to lead him through the ordeal that ensues–after which he becomes a "silent one". The Kubert panels within are particularly inspired with a gritty, yet economical use of black in his inks.

Another indispensable Kanigher/ Kubert classic is "What's the Price of a B-17" from *Our Army at War* #79 (February, 1959). The tale was reprinted in the first awesome war collection–*Sgt. Rock's Prize Battle Tales* [annual] #1...and rightfully so as this story stands as one of Kubert's greatest masterpieces. Words cannot describe the beauty of Kubert's lines in this story. On occasion, he would blend the rough-hewn qualities of abstraction with the most lovely inks and approach something like this, but rarely did it look better than it did in this yarn about a crew of air men who walk away from an air battle in their hulking yet crippled B-17. If this isn't enough, *OAaW* #79 contains a searing desert battle ordeal by Bob Haney and Mort Drucker with superb crosshatching to heighten the effect of the surreal tricks that the mind can play on people stuck in the middle of the desert.

An uncommonly seen book is *Star Spangled War Stories* #45–considered to be the first "washtone" cover DC published. The beautiful colors on this Grandenetti cover must have been a heavy enticement for any browser during May of 1956. The only thing of note within is a decent Kubert story–although not of the same style (or quality) as the first two gems mentioned. It is the cover which evokes the most interest here.

Jerry Grandenetti seemed to have a knack for fabulous war covers. Another classic is *GI Combat* #76. Steven Fears made mention of this in his "Greytone Gallery" article way back in *Overstreet's Comic Book Quarterly* #3, but the cover isn't the only great thing. This particular book could get the "Most Well Rounded" vote. The cover is a gorgeous study in tension and anticipation. Grandenetti's wonderful inks aren't obscured by the washtone effect and (as Steven Fears mentioned) the use of only brown and grey maximizes the impact. Within is a veritable feast of the greats of DC war: a tense cat and mouse game as delineated by Kubert; a satisfyingly on-target effort by Andru & Esposito for the 2nd story; a quirky yet stunning allegory of boxing called "The Second Champ"–wondrously rendered by Mort Drucker; and the coup de grace last story which deserves special mention. Any retro-



spective on DC war would be incomplete without pointing to the quiet giant–Russ Heath. Spectacular is the first word which comes to mind when reflecting upon this artist's career. This story is typical Heath (read "candy for the eyes")–a death-defying combination of photorealism and dynamics. "Don't Look Back" is a wonderful Haney story about a soldier who refuses to look back in hopes that he will inspire his comrade in arms to follow his lead as he goes through scrape after scrape with the enemy in a painstaking push forward into the enemy lines. Ironically, the soldier discovers at the end that his buddy had been in front of him the entire time. Incidentally, the Heath splash panel for this story correlates with the cover of *GI Combat* #75, another Grandenetti classic. The only thing missing from this book is a moody piece by the consistently fine Irv Novick to finish it off. *GI Combat* #76 is a prime example of the outstanding quality of the DC war stable. [While this would miss the cutoff for the first era of DC war, it is essentially a "pre-character driven" book, so for all intents and purposes, it should fall into the first Big-5 era.]

"CONTINUING CHARACTERS" ERA

The second era begins with the arrival of continuing characters in the Big-5 in 1959 and ends with Kubert replacing Kanigher as editor (so that Kanigher could devote more of his time to writing chores) for the Big-5 in mid-1968 (as documented by a memo in *GI Combat* #130). This time period saw the arrival and popularization of Sgt. Rock and Easy Co., Gunner, Sarge, & Pooch, Johnny Cloud, The Haunted Tank, Mademoiselle Marie, Balloon Buster, and the dinosaur/war books. These character driven titles have risen again to great popularity. For those who want to know only about the key issues, they need go no further than the *Overstreet Price Guide* to find out. For those seeking information about some wonderful little gems that wouldn't otherwise get much attention, read on (and check out *Chris Pedrin's Big Five Information Guide*).

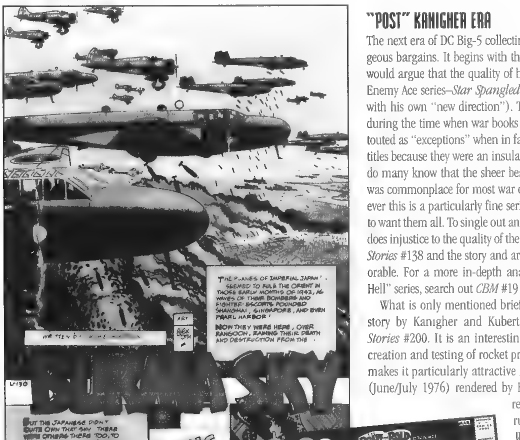
GI Combat #87 (March/April 1961) is one of these little gems. Okay, okay, before you say: "He just said he wouldn't be talking about key books!!", let it just be said that this book has been highly sought after by most people because they think it's another one of those undervalued semi-keys–the first appearance of some forgettable character/group in the gargantuan DC universe. Well it "ain't just that alone", as any logical person could see if s/he ever sees the cover. The cover alone is one of Russ Heath's best (although Mr. Heath has flatly dismissed this notion) and arguably one of the greatest covers ever done (tied for first in this fan's completely unbiased opinion); and yet it has never (to my knowledge) been the subject of an article in the past ten years (unless you count one very small picture of it in the color section

of the big *Overstreet Guide* about two years ago). Space won't be wasted talking about it. Just seeing it will convince most that there is something special about this book besides being the first appearance of whoever. However, the next part is the real shocker. This book is Heath through and through! "Big deal", say all the Sea Devils fans. But Big-5ers know that there wasn't a war book out there before or since which had the cover, the main 3-part story, and the backup all delineated by Heath... pretty much everything except the one page fillers by Waldinger/Nicolisi (war facts/informational) and Boltinoff ("Private Pete"–worthy of its own article). This "smorgasbord" of Heath is a rare delicacy–like the Sea Devils... only less absurd and juvenile (although only slightly less so according to Mr. Heath).

Another Big-5 book worthy of mention here is *Our Army at War* #120. The Kanigher/Kubert story is of the fine caliber to which most had aspired until this point, but this tale–"Battle Tags of Easy Co." tells how the heavy hitters of Easy, Rock, Wildman, Bulldozer, and Ice Cream Soldier, got their nicknames. It is worth noting that *Our Army at War* #128 gives the training and origin of how Rock became a soldier, but #120 explains–via flashback–how the soldiers received their "battletags". [This story harkens back to "Combat Tag" from *GI Combat* #55–a classic in its own right by the great Bill Finger and John Severin.] Interestingly, it was the names which defined and gave depth to the characters in so many of Kanigher's stories. *OAaW* #120 is really a type of origin for these characters (in an albeit different slant than that offered in #128). This combined with the great story and Kubert's fragmented yet slick art style make it a candidate for the "undiscovered classics" medal of honor.

Photorealism and historical detail are just two of the qualities John Severin brought to Enemy Ace during his stint on the strip. FACING PAGE: **Covers of *Our Army at War* #79 (Feb 1959, LEFT) and *Star Spangled War Stories* #45 (May 1956, RIGHT).**

One of the great Kubert/Kanigher collaborations, which is often left out of the DC Big-5 history books, is *Brave & the Bold* #52. For one thing, it just isn't among the Big-5 runs, so it is frequently overlooked or forgotten. On the flip side of the coin, I have a number of friends who collected *Brave & the Bold* (along with *Showcase*) religiously as it hit the stands; and when *Brave & the Bold* #52 came out, they were so incensed that it contained "that war Johnny Cloud, Lieutenant Stewart & the Haunted Tank, and Mademoiselle Marie. [Only *OAaW* #115 precedes this with a guest appearance by Mlle. Marie.] As an added bonus, it has an all out action cover with a deep purple (reminiscent of *Showcase* #55). This is an essential "outsider" to any DC Big-5 collection (as are *Showcase* #45, 53, 54, 57, 58; *Sgt. Rock's Prize Battle Tales Annual* #1; and *80 Page Giant* #8).


THE PLANES OF IMPERIAL JAPAN', SWORE TO RULE THE ORIENT IN THOSE EARLY MONTHS OF 1942. AS WAVES OF THEIR BOMBERS AND FIGHTER-ESCORTS POUNDED SHANGHAI, SINGAPORE, AND EVEN PEARL HARBOR!
NOW THEY WERE HERE... OVER RANGOON, RAINING THEIR DEATH AND DESTRUCTION FROM THE
BUT THE JAPANESE DIDN'T QUITE OWN THE SKY. THERE WERE STILL SOME THERE TOO TO CHALLENGE THEIR SUPREMACY.
THE A.V.G., MANNED THE BEST OF IT WITH THEIR OUTMODED CURTISS P-40 TOMAHAWKS... AND THERE WAS ONE LT. ZI PLANES AND 100 PILOTS, ON LOAN FROM CHINA
ONE SQUADRON OF THE A.V.G. (AMERICAN VOLUNTEER GROUP) FOR AS WE WERE NOW CALLED THIS...
LIVING
BATTLE STARS
12
3
Johnny Cloud!
ONCE THERE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE BATTLE THAT CLOSED THE WAR... THE COMBAT TEAM YOU'VE BEEN CLAMORING FOR IN... MORE FOR MY MONEY!

Splash page to Toth's "Burma Sky" – the story-telling and minimalist design make for a simple yet fabulous tale. At right, the elusive B&B #52.
FACING PAGE: **Interior page 8 to SSWS #79.**

bilge" that they actually skipped the purchase for that month. This came as little surprise as I searched for nearly seven years before I found a copy which graded above Fine. I don't know what happened to all of those copies which were never bought, but the book rates a Kochanek "ungettable" in high grade and it has my vote for scarcest post-1962 DC issue from a mainstream title (funny animal, teen humor, or romance titles not included). It's one of those books which will be consistently [and inexplicably] absent from an otherwise untouched (and unchernypicked) run which has every other issue around it–20 issues in each direction. Besides the relative scarcity of this book, it also has a fabulous story which incidentally contains the first "all-war" character crossover–starring Rock,

"POST" KANIGHER ERA

The next era of DC Big-5 collecting is the realm of some of the most outrageous bargains. It begins with the end of Kanigher's editorial duties. Some would argue that the quality of his stories improved with the unforgettable Enemy Ace series–*Star Spangled War Stories* #138-150 (closely coinciding with his own "new direction"). These issues stand as a classic series. Even during the time when war books were looked down upon, these issues were touted as "exceptions" when in fact, they just stood out from the typical war titles because they were an insular and tidy "miniseries" within a run. Little do many know that the sheer beauty of writing and art within these issues was commonplace for most war comics from the DC/Kanigher stable; however this is a particularly fine series and most people who've read one seem to want them all. To single out any particular issue over another in this series does injustice to the quality of the others, but the cover of *Star Spangled War Stories* #138 and the story and art in #143 stand out as exceptionally memorable. For a more in-depth analysis of this outstanding "Hammer from Hell" series, search out *CBM* #19 with a wonderful article by Guy Budziak.

What is only mentioned briefly in that article, however, is the 5-page story by Kanigher and Kubert contained within *Star Spangled War Stories* #200. It is an interesting "What if?" story, revolving around the creation and testing of rocket propulsion during WW I in Germany. What makes it particularly attractive is that it is the first new story in six years (June/July 1976) rendered by Kanigher and Kubert, and to this day it remains the last one done by the two. The run of Enemy Ace stories in *Star Spangled War Stories* #138-150, ranging between $32 to $85 (high book in *Overstreet*), makes that little series about as affordable as it gets. Having said this, "affordable" doesn't even begin to describe the $4 high book value on *Star Spangled War Stories* #200! A wonderful book for a wonderful price.

Another inexplicably ignored and hence reasonably priced book is *Our Fighting Forces* #146 (December 1973/January 1974) containing one of Alex Toth's finest works–"Burma Sky". This one ranks up there with his unmistakable "Thunderjet" and "F-86 Sabre Jet" done 22 years prior for Kurtzman's Frontline Combat at EC. Mr. Toth remembered "Burma" as an enjoyable work. In fact, everything about the story looks as though all involved treated it as a labor of love. Archie Goodwin's story is incomparably written. For the penultimate discourse on "Burma Sky", search out *Chris Pedrin's Big Five Information Guide* in which James Robinson pays tribute to the genius of the story and artistry. In addition to "Burma Sky", the Losers story, "The Forever

NUMBER 2'S OUT-- BELLY GUN OUT OF COMMISSION! WHAT'S THE PRICE OF A B-17, CAPTAIN?
TOO EARLY TO TELL...
WE HAVEN'T REACHED THE TARGET YET!
THE BRAND-NEW PILOTS FLEW ON IN THEIR "SECOND-HAND" FORT...
I THOUGHT WE'RE DOING DAYLIGHT BOMBING! LOOK UP AHEAD-- THE SKY'S DARK!
THAT'S THE FLAK ALL OVER THE TARGET AREA!
THAT'S WHERE WE'LL FIND OUT THE PRICE OF A B-17!

Walk" by John Severin is a not-too-shabby little delicacy as well. For those who are hungry for more fabulous Toth, one can find a reasonably priced meal in any one of the six towering achievements he rendered for DC war during the early to mid '70s within the pages of *Our Army at War* #235, 241, 254, *Our Fighting Forces* #134, 146, and *Star Spangled War Stories* #164.

It would have been difficult to conclude an article about all of the greats who contributed to DC war without mentioning the considerable talents of John Severin. While he did a group of fantastic stories back in the 1950s before his tenure at Marvel and *Cracked*, his finest war stories could well be his marvelous Enemy Ace backup stories in *Unknown Soldier* #251-253, 260, 261, and 265-267. When questioned about his work on the title, he reminisced fondly about his collaboration with Kanigher. Indeed, a more accurate stickler for historical detail than John Severin never put pencil to paper. As a result, his WW I aerial battle scenes are in a class all their own.

When I first went after these, I had my doubts that anything as late as 1982 could match the intensity of a Silver Age war book (a flawed prejudice admittedly). However, I not only retract those sentiments, but I may have to go out on a limb and say that Severin's take on Enemy Ace is (gulp!!!) just as great as Kubert's, although in an entirely different style. Severin's photorealism in these stories cannot be described. The mood conveyed by his amazing inking is a combination of ominous dread and limitless freedom. Severin surrealistically juxtaposes the anticipation of the soldiers in the claustrophobic barracks against the infinite expanses of the "killer skies" in these wonderful stories. Notably, Steve Savage (a.k.a. Balloon Buster) and Rittmeister Hans Von Hammer (Enemy Ace) go head to head in *Unknown Soldier* #255-257, and the ensuing battles are a feast for the eyes. Seeing is believing and these have to be among the most gorgeous things to come out of the 1980s. They are certainly a worthy highlight among the many in the entire DC Big-5 war genre.

To be able to discuss all of the classic stories contained in the Big-5 titles would comprise a novel in itself. Some are well-known and others have been neglected for too long. Hopefully, these mentioned contributions to this wonderful genre will no longer be ignored. These stories have long had the potential to be appreciated not for their monetary value but for their triumphs as aesthetic juggernauts. ■

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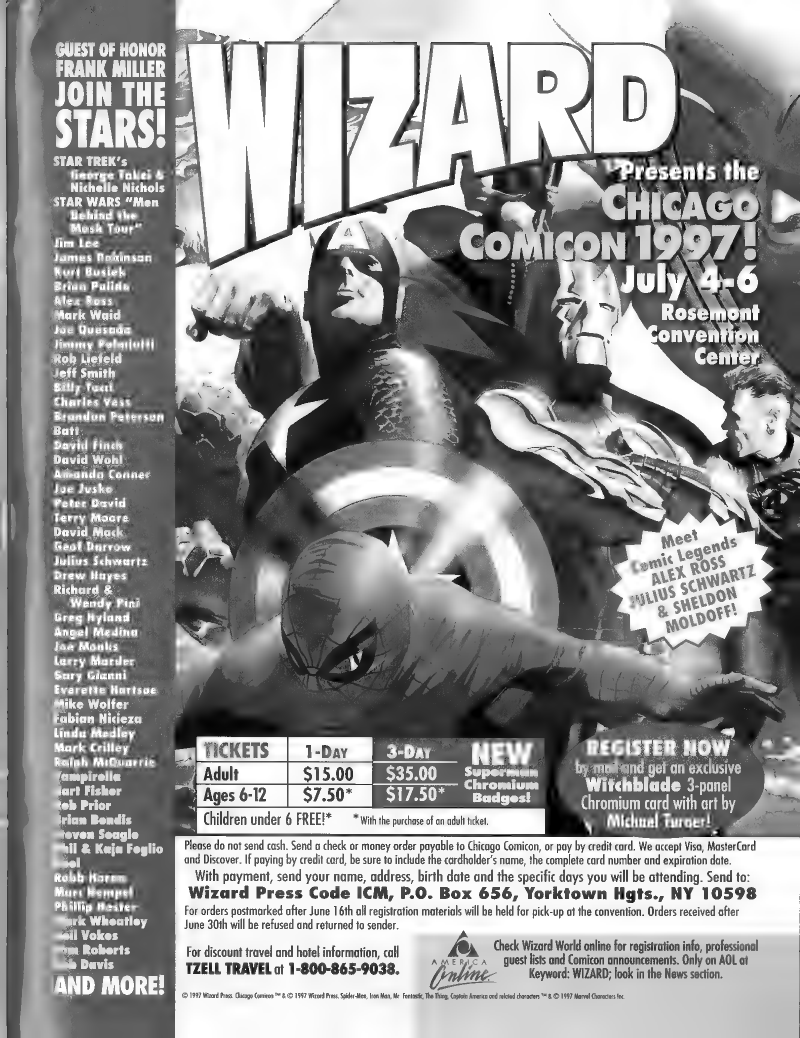
"I'M SURE CHARLIE CO. REMEMBERS THE WAY HE TURNED INTO A RUNAWAY LOCOMOTIVE AND..."
IT MUST BE THE BEARD! IT'S CHANGED HIM INTO A WILD MAN!

LEFT: Cover of **OAaW** #120 (Jul 1962). ABOVE: Classic panel from #120 featuring "the Beard". BELOW: A Heath panel from **GI Combat** #76 (Sep 1959) is like fine engraving–only with a pen!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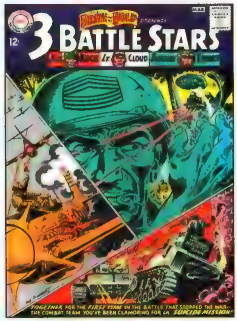
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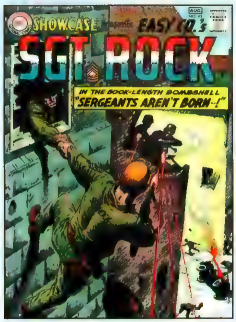
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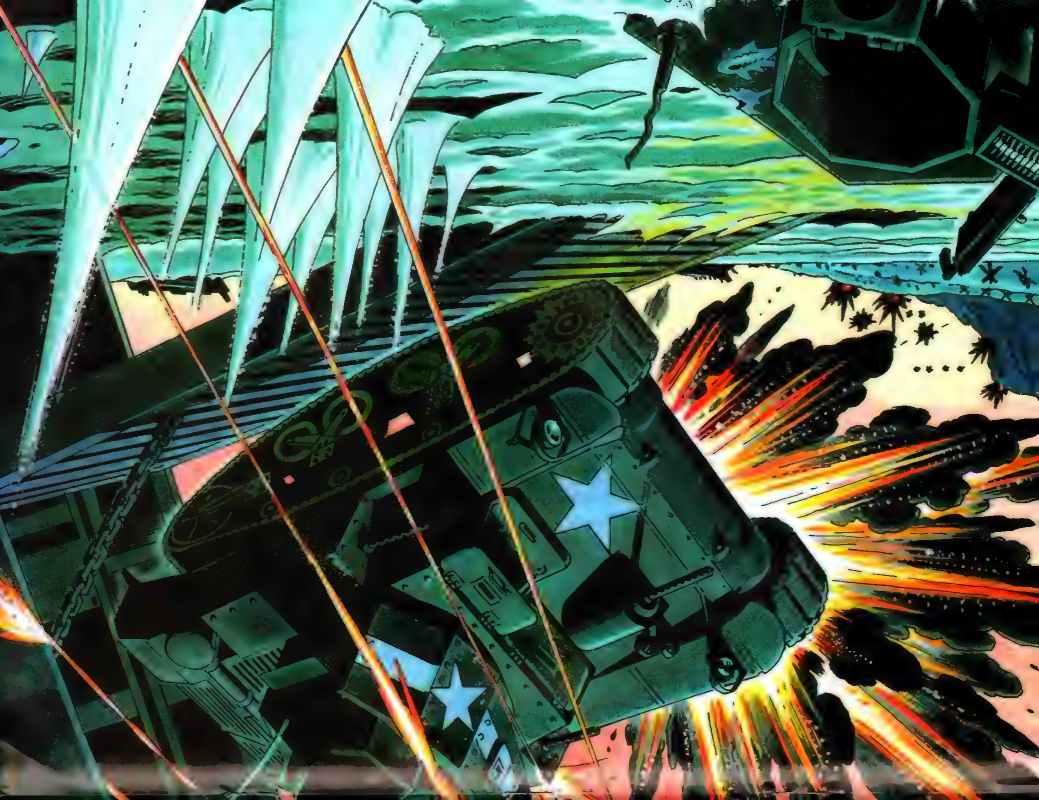

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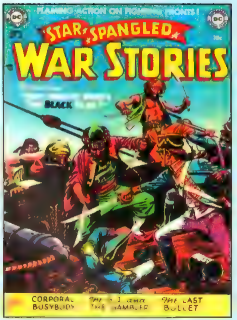
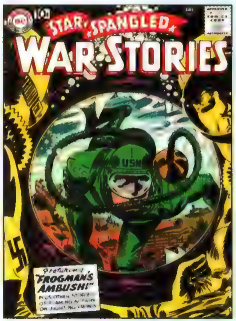

STAR SPANGLED
WAR STORIES
FLAMING ACTION ON FIGHTING FRONTS!
BLACK
CORPORAL BUSYBUDDY
THE LAST BULLET

STAR SPANGLED
WAR STORIES
Featuring "RENDEZVOUS WITH A RAFT"


STAR SPANGLED
WAR STORIES
Featuring "FROGMAN'S AMBUSH!"

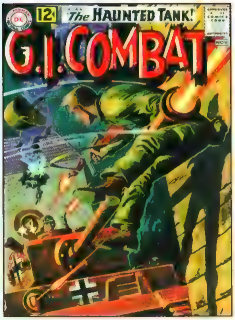
STAR SPANGLED
WAR STORIES
MLLE MARIE
THE BATTLE DOLL
in "The STEEL TRAP!"
MADEMOISELLE MARIE

STAR SPANGLED
WAR STORIES
ONE MAN N

STAR SPANGLED
WAR STORIES
Featuring "KRAKI MOSQUITO"

STAR SPANGLED
WAR STORIES
GIANT CREATURES HUNT A GI AND HIS ROBOT BUDDY ON THIS STARTLING
BATTLEFIELD OF TIME PERIODS!
DINOSAUR ATTACK ON DINOSAUR ISLAND!

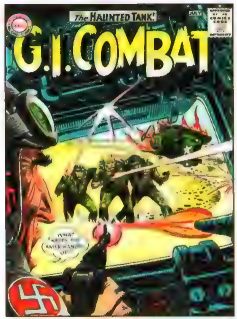
G.I. COMBAT
12¢
ATTILA
HAUNTED TANK!


12¢
The HAUNTED TANK!
G.I. COMBAT

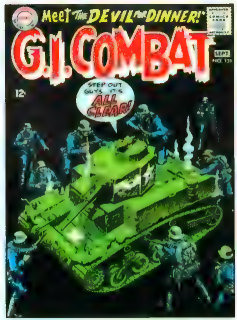
G.I. COMBAT
TRAP OF THE DRAGON'S TEETH

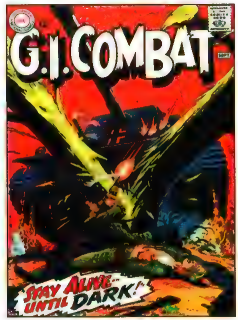
STILL 10¢
G.I. COMBAT

12¢
The HAUNTED TANK!
G.I. COMBAT


The HAUNTED TANK!
G.I. COMBAT

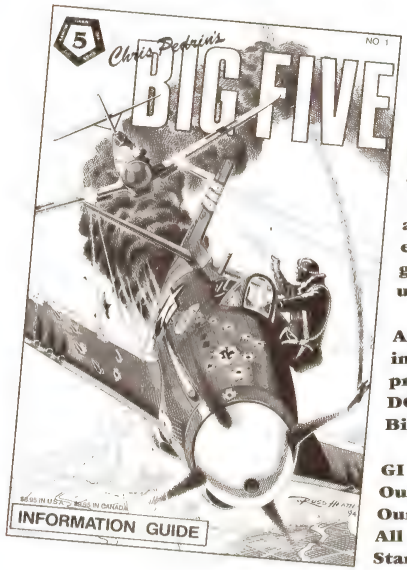
10¢
G.I. COMBAT


Meet "The DEVIL that DINNER!"
G.I. COMBAT
12¢
STEP OUT GUYS... IT'S ALL CLEAR!


G.I. COMBAT
STAY ALIVE UNTIL DARK!

the ultimate reference for

DC War!



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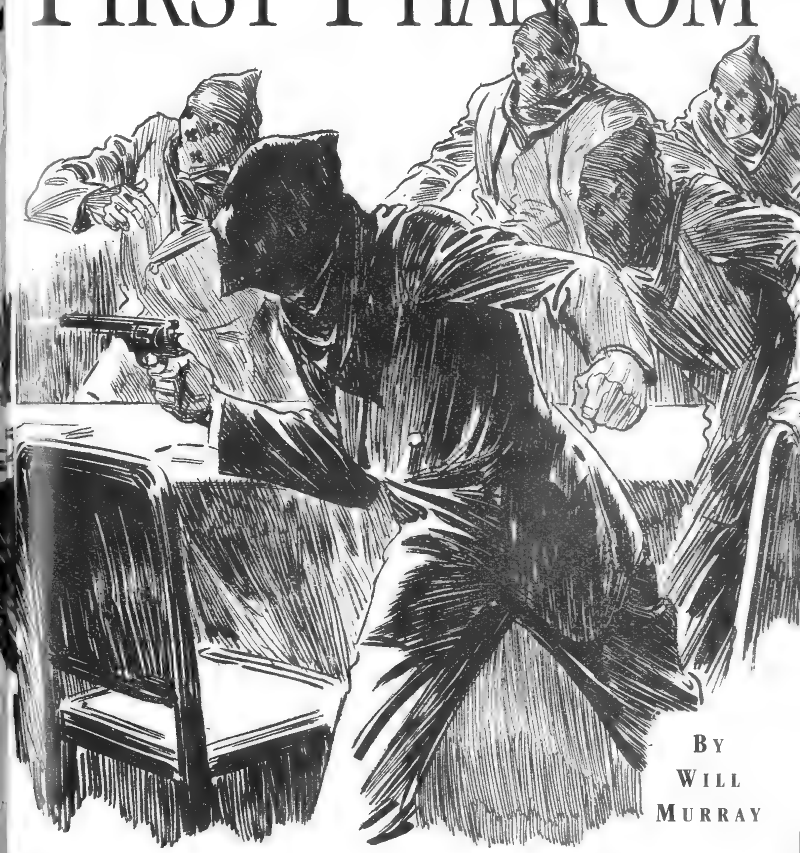
THE PULP CONNECTION PART I

THE

When Lee Falk's Phantom comic strip premiered on February 17, 1936, newspaper readers had never seen anything like him. Unless they happened to be fans of *The Phantom Detective* pulp magazine, that is. You may never have heard of *The Phantom Detective*, but as pulps went, it was probably the most significant influence on comic book superheros after *The Shadow*. A brief history: the magazine was launched in late 1932 on the heels of The Shadow's tremendous multi-media success. Published by Standard Magazines,

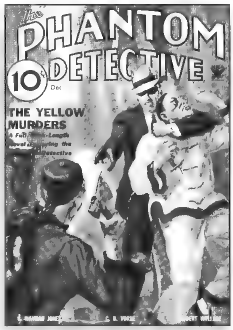
FIRST PHANTOM



BY
WILL
MURRAY

the so-called "Thrilling" Group, it ran for an amazing 20 years, ending in 1953. No dark cloaked avenger like The Shadow, he was a friendly but relentless pursuer of justice, who frequently worked with a grateful police force. You might call him Shadow Lite.

The first thing you have to understand about the hero of *The Phantom Detective* magazine is that he was not called *The Phantom Detective*. He was simply The Phantom. (Except in those rare instances where a new author goofed.) Actually, bored playboy, Richard Curtis Van Loan—the Phantom donned a variety of disguises to combat the legions of evil as exemplified by such villains as The Green God, The Gargoyle, The Satan, The Fang, The Faceless One, The Earless Man, and others of similar bizarre persuasion. Only Frank Havens, publisher of the *Daily Clarion*, knew that Van—or Dick (again, depending on the writer's whim)—was the mysterious Phantom.



Reading a stack of *The Phantom Detectives*, you'd swear it was a trial run for Batman or any of the bored playboys-turned-crimebusters who followed. The Phantom wore no costume—only a domino mask or more frequently, assorted disguises. He was known as The Man of a Thousand Faces and The World's Greatest Sleuth. The Batman prefigurings are not as striking a coincidence as you'd expect. For the two main editors of *The Phantom Detective*—both of whom jumped to DC in the early '40s—were Jack Schiff, who hired a teenaged Mort Weisinger in 1934. One of the writers they put on the Phantom was

FACING PAGE: "Diamonds of Death" (V6#1, Jun 1934). ABOVE: Phantom Det. V4#1 (Dec 1933) featuring the "Yellow Murders". RIGHT: The Phantom Det. poised to ambush in "The Hollywood Murders" (V9#2, Mar 1935).

THE PHANTOM TAKES CHARGE!

Prominent citizens met gruesome deaths—crime was rampant—and the police were at a loss. There was no possible solution, no clue to aid them in putting their fingers on the sinister instigators of these lawless activities—

And then the Phantom entered the case and took charge! The exciting, breath-taking, thrill-giving events that ensued when Richard Curtis Van Loan turned his remarkable talents to the unearthing of the grim mystery are told in this month's great book-length novel—

THE YELLOW MURDERS

A gripping epic of crime—and the hideous traffic in pernicious, illicit drugs—this novel will astonish you with its swift-moving action and startling developments.

Again you will be amazed at the resourcefulness, skill and daring of the world's greatest enemy of crime —The Phantom Detective!

no less than Whitney Ellsworth, who upon becoming Editor-in-Chief of National, hired Weisinger to edit Superman and Batman, and who in turn hired Schiff to hold down the four-color fort while Weisinger went off to war. When all three men got into comics, they instinctively understood that the infant industry needed better writing and plotting if it was to survive. And so they reached into their bag of pulp tricks and elevated the new medium.

Like the classic Batman stories, the Phantom's were murderous puzzle stories. The bad guy—whether The Beast King or The Crimson Clown (it didn't matter; they were cut from the same crazyquilt cloth)—not content to knock off banks or murder business rivals, felt irresistibly compelled to taunt the Phantom every step of the way. Take the Keyboard Killer in 1940's "The Phantom and the Melody Murders". His M.O. was to mail musical jingles to the police, daring them to catch him. It was pure Joker. Or Riddler. Take your pick

God alone knows who wrote *The Phantom*. The early stories were the work of D. L. Champion, under the pen name of G. Wayman Jones. After a year, the byline changed to Robert Wallace, a house name that disguised a parade of pulpsters ranging from the legendary Henry Kuttner to the obscure Anatole France Feldman.

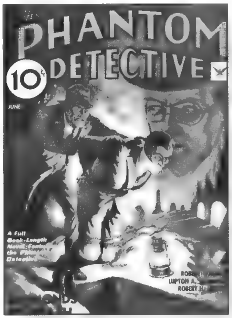
Many who later became comics writers wrote their share of Phantoms, including Ray Cummings, Norman A. Daniels, Don Cameron, and Charles Greenberg—who jumped directly from Phantom's to Batman at Mort Weisinger's request. The Keyboard Killer was one of Greenberg's villains. As was The Bat, a villain suspiciously resembling Batman, who appeared in "The Yacht Club Murders" in early 1939. Jack Schiff, who guided

FACING PAGE & ABOVE RIGHT: **A full page house ad promises gruesome deaths and hideous traffic in pernicious, illicit drugs in "The Yellow Murders" (Phantom Detective V4#1, Dec 1933).** RIGHT: **A suspect leaps to his death to escape capture in "The Yellow Murders.**

Batman's destiny for so long, often points to the Phantom and his fellow Standard hero, the Black Bat, as virtual templates for the classic Batman.

The cross-pollination was so great that if you want a likely inspiration for the famed Bat-signal, you need only look to the July, 1936 issue of *The Phantom*, wherein was introduced the red signal light atop the Clarion Building. When the Phantom's sleuthing skills were needed, the red light, visible all over Manhattan, would blaze up, and Van Loan would soon appear–disguised as almost anyone except Havens' niece, the comely Muriel.

All these elements I should mention, crop up in the Phantom strip which ran in Nedor's *Thrilling Comics* between 1946-49. (Not that they helped much.) Nedor was the comic arm of Standard.



RIGHT: **A graveyard scene adorns the cover of Phantom Detective V6#1 (Jun 1934).** BELOW: **A private dick in a double breasted suit saves the heroine from sure death in "The Hollywood Murders" (V9#2, Mar 1935).**

So what does this have to do with Lee Falk's Phantom? Well, just this: When Falk, initially drawing the strip himself, created his Phantom, he envisioned him as a masked urban crimefighter. Falk readily admits his original intent–changed literally in mid-story was to reveal that his New York based mystery man was really bored playboy Jimmy Wells. The entire Kit Walker/Bangalla/Singh Brotherhood/Oath of the Skull backstory occurred to him just as he was about to play the Jimmy Wells card and consign the Ghost Who Walks to the probable-purgatory of a comic strip version of the pulp Phantom.

Falk has consistently affirmed that he was not a reader of pulp magazines. And that the unceremonious jettisoning of poor Jimmy Wells (who was revived in the recent Paramount film) from the strip came about simply because inspiration struck him. And further, he originally wanted to call his hero the Gray Ghost, but had second thoughts on that score too.

There is no reason to doubt or question Falk's recollections. But I can easily imagine the publishers of *The Phantom Detective* magazine watching Falk's continuity very closely, their lawyers on high alert, ready to pounce on King Features.

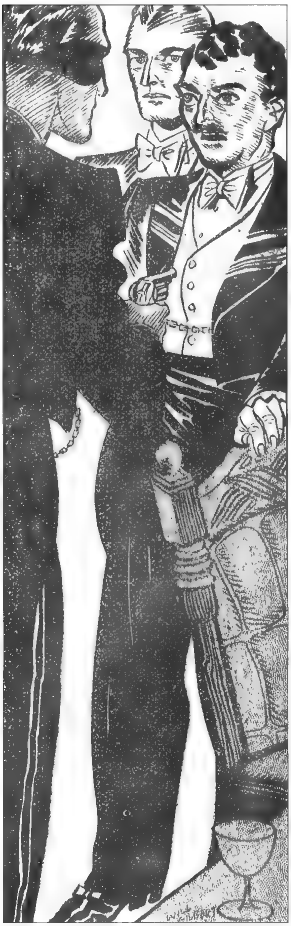
This was definitely a thin-ice situation. In production for publication in

the August, 1936 *Phantom Detective* was a story called "Specter of Death" which contained a brief scene where Van Loan seemingly returns from the dead and confronts a minor thug, who blurts out two lines that will become Lee Falk standbys: "The Phantom's dead I killed him myself."

The next paragraph is pure Ghost Who Walks: "Van put more chill into his voice. 'The Phantom never dies, Limpy!' " No doubt those very lines were destined to surface in any planned legal challenge to King Features' right to trademark their Phantom.

Until Lee Falk, struck by inspiration, wisely invented an ingenious new riff on what was at that point a recycling of assorted pulp clichés and moved the action into the jungle—and into comic strip history. And without realizing it, likely averted a potential legal battle for King Features. ■

Will Murray is the author of 50 novels in such popular series as The Destroyer, Doc Savage, The Executioner and Mars Attacks, as well as numerous short stories and articles. He is the Boston correspondent for Starlog *magazine. A life-long Marvel Comics fan, he is justifiably proud of having injected the notorious Squirrel Girl into the Marvel Universe, aided and abetted by Spider-Man co-creator, Steve Ditko.*

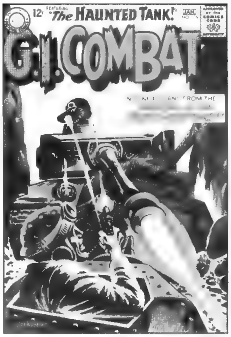


ABOVE: **The "Silent Menace" strikes again in Phantom Detective #V6#3 (Aug 1934).** RIGHT: **The murderer is confronted by the masked hero himself in "Death's Diary" (Phantom Detective V4#3, Feb 1934).**

MEMORIES OF THE Haunted Tank!

Gunner, Sarge, & Pooch survived insurmountable odds... Sgt. Rock and the combat-happy Joes of Easy Co. prevailed time and again... but Lt. Jeb Stuart and his Haunted Tank crew starred in DC's most realistic war stories!

Once again Russ Heath perfectly freezes the action on the incredible cover of G.I. Combat #91 (Dec '61/Jan '62, LEFT). Joe Kubert's beautiful wash cover makes G.I. Combat #109 (Dec '64/Jan '65, RIGHT) a collector's prize. Sgt. Rock teams up with Lt. Jeb Stuart in G.I. Combat #108 (Oct/Nov '64, FACING PAGE).



The cover to *G.I. Combat* #87 (April/May, 1961) is not only inaccurate... it's misleading! Misleading in the sense that one of DC's premiere war series snuck in the back door of our collective comic hearts without fanfare for its first appearance. Undoubtedly, comics' definitive tank crew and cast for the "Haunted Tank" deserved better. But we embraced the soldiers and the tank's resident ghost, General J.E.B. Stuart, just the same

(The "inaccuracy" I allude to is historical. The TBF Avenger torpedo planes were being used as dive bombers. The Navy's two top dive bombers were the SBD Dauntless and the Helldiver. In contrast, the Avenger was designed to come in flat, at deck level (with fighter cover) as its method of nailing enemy "tin cans" (destroyers) and other enemy ships. Ensign George Jay was flying an Avenger at Midway when he was splashed and watched our Navy destroy the Japanese flat-tops changing the course of WWII-but I digress...)

The four man crew was led by Jeb Stuart–namesake of the aforementioned James Ewell Brown (aka J.E.B.) Stuart, the great Civil War Confederate leader. Rick, Arch, and Slim comprised the rest of the armored cavalry crew.

Our heroes are in an M-3 Stuart light tank which was fast, lightly armored and armed, and was a cast member in its own right. Early on the HT crew was regularly teased about being assigned to such a small tank... mainly by all the other "big" tank crews. The Pershings and Shermans, although bigger and more heavily armored and armed, weren't as fast or maneuverable as the Stuart. This attribute lent credence to the horse cavalry themes of hit-and-run, dodge-and-elude, and harass-&-confound the enemy as professed by the ghost.

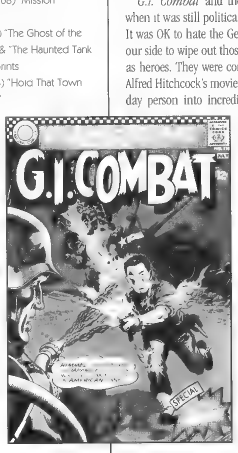
Part of the novelty of the storyline was derived by the monumental coinci-

BY STEPHEN GENTNER

CBM CHECKLIST

Silver Age Appearances of the Haunted Tank in G.I. Combat

87 (Apr/May 1961) "Introducing The Haunted Tank" 1st Haunted Tank
88 (Jun/Jul 1961) "Haunted Tank vs Ghost Tank"
89 (Aug/Sep 1961) "Tank With Wings"
90 (Oct/Nov 1961) "Tank Raiders"
91 (Dec/Jan 1961-62) "The Tank And The Turtle"
92 (Feb/Mar 1962) "The Tank Of Doom!"
93 (Apr/May 1962) "No-Return Mission"
94 (Jun/Jul 1962) "The Haunted Tank vs Killer Tank"
95 (Aug/Sep 1962) "The Ghost Of The Haunted Tank"
96 (Oct/Nov 1962) "The Lonesome Tank"
97 (Dec/Jan 1962-63) "The Decoy Tank!"
98 (Feb/Mar 1963) "Trap of the Dragon's Teeth"
99 (Apr/May 1963) "Battle of the Thirsty Tanks" - 1st Kubert Haunted Tank
100 (Jun/Jul 1963) "Return of the Ghost Tank!"
101 (Aug/Sep 1963) "The Haunted Tank vs Attila's Battle Tiger!"
102 (Oct/Nov 1963) "Battle Window!"
103 (Dec/Jan 1963-64) "Rabbit Punch for a Tiger!"
104 (Feb/Mar 1964) "Blind Man's Radar!
105 (Apr/May 1964) "Time Bomb Tank!"
106 (Jun/Jul 1964) "Two-Sided War!"
107 (Aug/Sep 1964) "The Ghost Pipers!"
108 (Oct/Nov 1964) "The Wounded Won't Wait!" - Sgt. Rock x-over
109 (Dec/Jan 1964-65) "Battle of the Tank Graveyard"
110 (Feb/Mar 1965) "Choose Your War!"
111 (Apr/May 1965) "Death Trap!" - Sgt Rock x-over
112 (Jun/Jul 1965) "Ghost Ace!"
113 (Aug/Sep 1965) "Tank Fight in Death Town!"
114 (Oct/Nov 1965) "Battle Origin of the Haunted Tank!" - origin Haunted Tank
115 (Dec/Jan 1965-66) "Medal for Mayhem"
116 (Feb/Mar 1966) "Battle Cry of a Dead Man"
117 (Apr/May 1966) "Tank in the Icebox!"
118 (Jun/Jul 1966) "My Buddy-My Enemy!"
119 (Aug/Sep 1966) "Target for a Firing Squad!"
120 (Oct/Nov 1966) "Pull a Tiger's Tail!"
121 (Dec/Jan 1966-67) "Battle of Two Wars!"
122 (Feb/Mar 1967) "Who Dies Next?"
123 (Apr/May 1967) "The Target of Terror!"
124 (Jun/Jul 1967) "Scratch That Tank!"
125 (Aug/Sep 1967) "Stay Alive Until Dark!"
126 (Oct/Nov 1967) "Tank Umbrella!
127 (Dec/Jan 1967-68) "Mission Sudden Death!"
128 (Feb/Mar 1968) "The Ghost of the Haunted Tank!" & "The Haunted Tank vs Killer Tank"reprints
129 (Apr/May 1968) "Hold That Town for a Dead Man!"
130 (Jun/Ju 1968) "Battle of the Generals"
131 (Aug/Sep 1968) "The Devil for Dinner!"
132 (Oct/Nov 1968) "The Executioner!"
133 (Dec/Jan 1968-69) "Operation Death Trap"
134 (Feb/Mar 1969) "Desert Holocaust"
135 (Apr/May 1969) "Death is the Joker"
136 (Jun/Jul 1969) "Kill Now-Pay Later"
137 (Aug/Sep 1969) "We Can't See!"
138 (Oct/Nov 1969) "The Losers!" first Losers
139 (Dec/Jan 1969-70) "Corner of Hell" Jeb gets married



dence (ahem) that Jeb "Stuart" was assigned a "Stuart" tank and Gen. J.E.B. Stuart's ghost was the back seat "haunt" of said tank. The masterful stories of men and machines in the throes of war, as penned by Robert Kanigher (pronounced "Can-i-grrr"), utilized the ghost of J.E.B. Stuart to foreshadow what was to come in most stories. To my nine year old mind, Kanigher was an ace at involving me with the characters and situations the Haunted Tank was confronted with in every issue

Each tank member's character development rendered them unique, and I could identify with all of them. The underdog tank crew in the underdog tank, fighting against stronger German Tiger Tanks made for some provocative and edge-of-your-seat reading. I liked all those nefarious traps and pitfalls they were confronted with-all the while being tantalized by J.E.B. Stuart's ghost helping with clues Jeb the younger pondered many times: "If I could only divine the hidden meanings behind his [the ghost's] cryptic clues, we would be ready"

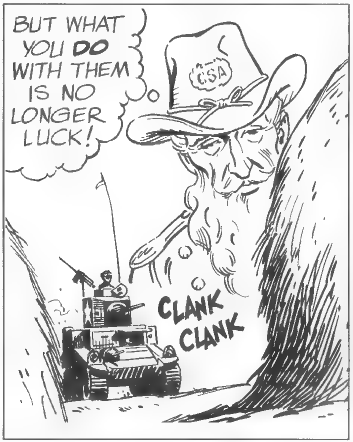
G.I. Combat and the Haunted Tank came on the scene when it was still politically correct to be proud of our military It was OK to hate the Germans (i.e. Nazis). It was OK to want our side to wipe out those guys. It was OK to idolize these G.I.s as heroes. They were common... yet uncommon (almost like Alfred Hitchcock's movie formula of putting an average, everyday person into incredible, unbelievable danger). Kanigher threw these "regular guys" into entertaining situations. But the underlying plot element was clear... they were heroes!

It seems that lately, some historical revisionists try to vilify the US and its armed forces during that time period... willing accomplices in the media buy into this view as truth. In contrast, these great comic books accurately portrayed the heroic side of the U.S. military They were wonderful because I knew exactly who the good guys were... and I wanted to be like them. I wanted good to win over evil, clearly and decisively. Relating to them was easy, especially as a kid, because good did win... and these fictional soldiers were the reason. It made me feel like I won too! Haunted Tank stories made me proud to be on the side of the good guys!

Part of the allure of great comics is the quality of the art inside and out. As a visual medium, you have to have good art in comics to go with good writing. It isn't one or the other. The talents of Russ Heath and Joe Kubert added a dynamism which could never be duplicated. They were the masters of this all too underrated genre. In the Golden Age, Alex Schomburg covers promised and the interiors rarely (*Continued on page 59*)

Explosive Haunted Tank Issues!

While all of the first 40-50 issues of the *G.I. Combat* Haunted Tank are in the "classic style" of the Big-5 titles, there are a number of issues which stand out from others. *G.I. Combat* #87 marks the first appearance and origins/enlistment of the tank crew. Besides being the prototypical issue which sets the stage for countless metal cavalry stories with Stuart and the boys, it contains three chapters of some of the most aesthetically pleasing Heath art with story elements which made the readers come back for more. Heath's take on landscapes in this story strengthens the assertions of many Heath fans who often refer to him as a "master draftsman". In many ways, the cat and mouse game which ensues between the H.T. and the enemy tanks is like a draftsman's master plan–a grid-like panorama of an abandoned town as seen from above. In terms of landscape, only Infantino's hyper perspective and futuristic cityscapes are as memorable.



Many of the subsequent stories revolved around a tank adversary as unique as the M-3 Stuart. Often times, the enemy would have a diabolical way of concealment which involved underground bunkers or elevating platforms which appeared out of nowhere; but some of the best stories centered on the tank as the underdog saving the day against seemingly immeasurable odds. *G.I. Combat* #96 has some sizzling panels which depict the tank defending itself against enemy dive bombers. As usual the detail of the machinery is uncanny. Heath's photorealistic crosshatching was expertly juxtaposed against his expert use of black to convey the mood of approaching doom as the crippled tank was left in a hamlet as little more than a pillbox, to "stop 'em at all costs".

The battle action in #97 has lots of medium and closeup shots of Jeb Stuart as he mans the tripod mounted 30 caliber and fires with teeth-gnashing fury and desperation. The frantic anticipation of the crew as they wildly struggle with an American impostor who has held the tank hostage with his grenade promotes a near empathetic adrenaline rush every time I read this one.

Joe Kubert's first stint on *G.I. Combat* #99 is a particularly pleasing salute to the excellent Bogart-led flick–"Sahara". While most consider Heath to be the definitive HT artist, and Kubert to be the premiere Rock artist, it was always a pleasure to see the two switch artistic obligations once in awhile (Heath's occasional 1960's *Our Army at War* work and his near "take-over" of Rock in the late 1960s through the mid-'70s would forever lay to rest some of the Silver/Gold purists' skepticism of the quality of Bronze Age material. If you only could know…). In this case, Kubert lays out a grim story of the H.T. crew as they defend a dry desert oasis against a large regiment of tigers. Like the aforementioned movie, the part where the crew is pouring engine oil over themselves (as if the water was plentiful) to drive the dry-mouthed Nazis over the edge had to happen sooner or later in this title and this is that issue.

While *Our Army at War* rarely had any crossover appearances of the other war characters, *G.I. Combat* (starting with #108) had guest shots commonly. Inside #108, there is another exciting Kanigher/Kubert collaboration with the likes of Sgt. Rock and the Easy Company regulars. This is actually the first such meeting of Rock and the H.T. since *Brave & Bold* #52. (A text box in #108 makes reference to this "3 Battle Star" issue as preceding *GIC* #108. Some of the subsequent battle star guest appearances were in #111, 115, 116, 120, 123, and 124. Perhaps the best is #123 with Heath's unmistakable take on Mlle. Marie.)

G.I. Combat #114 has been acknowledged as the origin of the Haunted Tank for some time now, but the word "origin" in the case of most war characters including Rock and the H.T. is a mis-

nomer. This is a depiction of their first mission in an American invasion of a North African beach. The assignment of J.E.B. Stuart to be the guardian of the Stuart tank [by Alexander the Great no less] is a classic touch of Kanigher, while the elegant panels of the crew defending themselves against enemy planes in the middle of the ocean is a triumph only Russ Heath could have delivered. The depiction of the ensuing ordeal in the desert is even more slick (is that possible?) than the Heath H.T. stories which preceded this one. This story appears to be a labor of love from all involved.

G I Combat #130 is a real keeper in that the ghost of Gen. J.E.B. Stuart clashes with the ghost of Attila the Hun. This fierce test of wills mirrors the trials and tribulations of the Haunted Tank crew as they go head to head with the enemy. The ghostly battle is particularly special because it showcases (in large panels) the ghosts as if they were two gigantic gods duking it out against the horizon. Heath pulls out all the stops here (as usual). Of particular interest is the likeness of the swordfight in this book to those in the Golden Gladiator stories illustrated by Heath ten years prior. ■

DDAAMM
ENEMY DIVE BOMBERS ATTACKING THE BIG BOYS!
HOW CAN I TELL THEM **YOU'RE** ALL THE GOOD LUCK I NEED, GEN. STUART--WITHOUT ANY-ONE ELSE BEING ABLE TO SEE OR HEAR YOU EXCEPT ME?
LUCK'S A SMALL PART OF WAR, JEB! LIKE HAVING THOSE **HAY-STACKS** UP THERE AHEAD TO USE--IN CASE THEY'RE NEEDED!

Three classic Haunted Tank panels from G.I. Combat #96 (page 5) by Russ Heath. Note how effectively the artist communicates the idea that J.E.B. Stuart is a ghost-like apparition by making the character seem "transparent", the use of thought balloons instead of word balloons, and the Confederate officer's exaggerated size.

(Continued from page 56) delivered. Conversely, the considerable desirability of these DC war covers was consistent with (if not topped by) the delineations within. The planes looked the way they should have… and they were always crafted in such a way as to best embellish a plot sequence and make the story flow–so much so that I always felt cheated at how fast the story would end, wanting more. I'd always feel let down when the issue was over and I'd have to wait two whole months for the next one.

A typical plot would go something like this: Jeb's feet are killing him because the Army gave him boots that were a half size too small.

"I can't do my job or even think straight my feet hurt so much, guys!" "Oh, come on Jeb, we've got much bigger problems than your foot woes to worry about."

Tank battles plage in the "The Battle Origin of the Haunted Tank" (GI Combat #114, Oct/Nov 1965).

"Yeah, Tiger Toes! Har de har har!!"

Then the ghost would appear. "Ah, Jeb, if only a soldier's grumbling about foot apparel was all the problems a hidden truth could tell..." *(fade away).*

Jeb goes, "What the hell does that mean?"

"Guys, Jeb's talking to himself again."

"You would if you were sitting outside in the open all day–easy pickin's for some German sniper!"

"Holy Cow! a tiger in a dugout trench!!... rotate the turret before he does!!–fire! fire! fire! BLANGGT."

"Gee, I was so engrossed in the battle, I forgot my feet hurt!"

Ghost fade in. "Ah-now you know the "hidden" truth!!" The End! Someone once said that Kanigher's writing style was a "one note symphony"–that those ideas which he couldn't come up with himself he co-opted and made his own. It's a tough call. All I know is that the flavor, strength, and consistency of the end product resonated with me and the other readers of "The Big 5" DC war comics.

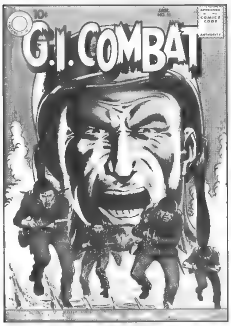
The different permutations and combinations of the crew and the tank itself. I will leave to the excellent reference book *Chris Pedrin's Big Five Information Guide.* Chris' exhaustive reference and the enthusiasm he has for this material is infectious. The book is a "must have" for all serious collectors!

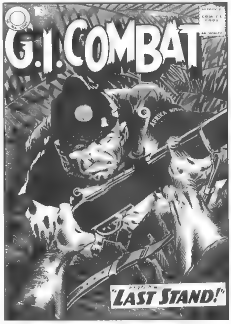
War comics have been around a long time. Quality. Charlton, Marvel, ...the list goes on and on. For me, though, DC's Silver Age offerings have to be the best consistently produced and regularly published war comics ever. Johnny Cloud, Sgt. Rock, Enemy Ace, Gunner and Sarge, Pooch, Mlle. Marie, Capt. Storm, Steve Savage-and especially the Haunted Tank, exemplified this genre. But after all these years, I can say without equivocation that the Haunted Tank stories are still my favorites!

As kids, we didn't know it all... but we knew what we liked! As we set fire to our model planes to throw out of the upstairs windows... or bailed out of swings yelling, "Bombs away over Tokyo!!", you knew you'd find a copy of *G.I. Combat* in someone's back pocket. ■

Stephen Gentner, a collector since 1960, was a regular contributor to the "original" CBM. In "real life" he is a third generation hotelier, and operates the Imperial Hotel in downtown Portland, Oregon.

FACING PAGE: The cover of GI Combat #118 (Jun/Jul '66) depicts a Japanese soldier on fire… a rare departure for mid '60s DC comics. ABOVE: Close-up of tank commander Jeb Stuart from the cover of GI Combat #115 (Dec '65/Jan '66).



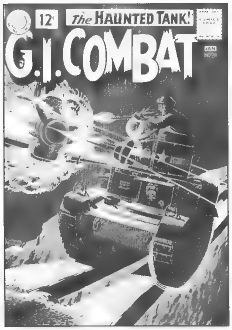


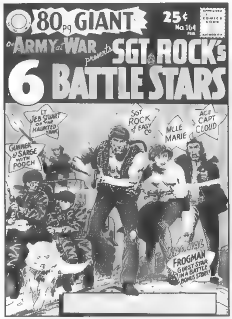
Greg's top ten list by vertical row: FIRST ROW: **G.I. Combat #56, G.I. Combat #71,** SECOND ROW: **G.I. Combat #91, Our Army at War #164,** THIRD ROW: **Our Army at War #112,** FOURTH ROW: **All American Men of War #52,** FIFTH ROW: **Star Spangled War Stories #81, Our Fighting Forces #71,** SIXTH ROW: **Star Spangled War Stories #88, Star Spangled War Stories #103.**

ALL COVERS © 1997 DC

The Best

A combat-happy collector picks





I'm a self proclaimed DC war comic book fan and it took over thirty years to search out and obtain these TNT classics. It feels as if it has taken that same amount of time to decide which of all those books comprise my ten favorite DC war covers (whew). I wanted to list about 1,600 of them, so you can imagine how hard it was to whittle the list down to ten. Let me also say that no group of books has meant so much to me as a collector over the years… and most DC war books are still reasonably a real joy to collect. So with great enthusiasm (and much anguish), here are my ten favorite covers:

1. Our Army At War #112 (Nov. 1961, cover by Joe Kubert) – The whole squad is there… to this very day, it still knocks me out!

2. Our Fighting Forces #71 (Oct. 1962, cover by Jerry Grandenetti) – A gorgeous greytone cover, and, I've always been partial to Pooch. You'll notice he's the only one who isn't sweating.

# of DC War

his top 10 favorites!

By Greg Pharis

3. G.I. Combat #91 (Jan. 1962, cover by Russ Heath) – This gem features The Haunted Tank in glorious greytone action. Thank you Russ "Mr. Detail" Heath.

4. G.I. Combat #56 (Jan. 1958, cover by Joe Kubert) – I don't know any comic fans that don't love this cover. Another great job by the master.

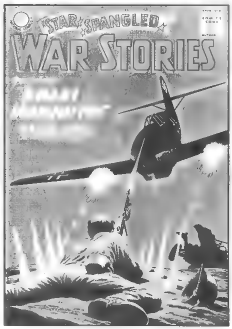
5. G.I. Combat #71 (Apr. 1959, cover by Joe Kubert) – Imagine that – another of Joe's masterpieces. Joe always had the uncanny ability to make the enemy look really ominous.

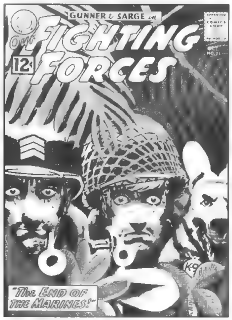
6. Star Spangled War Stories #81 (May 1959, cover by Russ Heath) – Truly elegant and beautiful in its deceptive simplicity. The other great war cover master at his best.

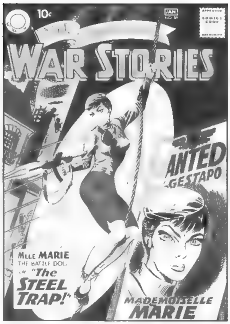
7. Star Spangled War Stories #88 (Jan. 1960, cover by Jerry Grandenetti) – The Battle Doll in one of the all-time classic action poses. Hope she doesn't get rope burns.

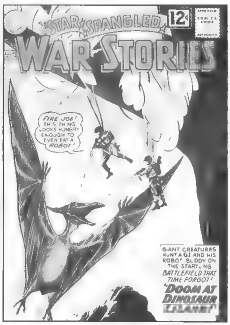
8. All American Men of War #52 (Dec. 1957, cover by Joe Kubert) – Mr. Kubert again rivets the eye with perfectly rendered frozen action. Can you imagine conceptualizing a cover idea in which the main figure has presence of mind to shoot at the enemy while sitting on a cannon while it's going off? Brilliant idea for an attention getter at the newsstands, and a classic.

9. Our Army At War #164 (Feb. 1966, cover by Joe Kubert) – Another great Joe Kubert killer that features all characters right there on one cover and has a story for each for them. This is the book I would choose to take if I were








STAR SPANGLED
WAR STORIES
GIANT CREATURES HUNT G.I. AND HIS MODERN TANK IN THE STRANGEST BATTLEFIELD OF THIS TIME PERIOD!
"DOOM OF DINOSAUR FLAME!"

IN MEMORIAM

Tom French

(September 1, 1930 – March 17, 1997)

As I sit to put electronic bits to paper in an effort to transcribe the conversations and shared memories of a special man, I am struck with sadness for the passing of Tom French on March 17, 1997 after a brief illness. He was known in the comic collecting community as a collector, dealer, liaison for the dealers attending the Comic-Con International: San Diego, and lastly, a friend.

I first came to know Tom in 1989 when I joined the Comic-Con International committee. He was one of the "old-timers" who had been working on the committee since the days of the El Cortez cons. Since the Con's inception in 1970, Tom had only missed five shows. In 1995, I was elected the Vice President of Exhibits for the 1996 con, and again for the 1997 con. This made Tom a department head in my division of the convention, the Dealer's Liaison.

I could count on Tom to coordinate the placement of the dealers/exhibitors on the floor. He had a phenomenal memory regarding the history each had with the convention. He had the daunting task of trying to please several hundred dealers/exhibitors in their booth placement and setup. He knew the relationships dealers have with each other; therefore, who can be placed next to whom and who should be as far away from each other as possible.

The dealers I have spoken with recently have described to me the same qualities I had observed. He had extraordinary patience and cool when it came to settling table/booth disputes, problems with setup/takedown and altercations between dealers. He could resolve each problem in a manner that was usually satisfactory to both parties. (Face it guys, some of you are never satisfied.) He never ceased to amaze me.

I was fortunate that I was able to spend time with him prior to his death. At that time I conveyed to him my thanks for his contribution to making my life easier as Vice President. It will be a difficult if not impossible task to fill Tom's shoes.

There is a sense of loss that will only be heightened at this year's convention when I pass the space where he would have been sitting at his regular booth. Farewell, Tom.

—Beth Holley

MY TOP 10 DC WAR

stranded on a deserted island and could only have one DC war book.

10. Star Spangled War Stories #103 (July 1962, cover by Ross Andru) My pick for the most interesting and memorable of the "dino" covers. The element of absurdity alone makes it worth the price of admission. A human, a robot, and a dinosaur… what's wrong with this picture? Not a thing war book lovers, not a thing.

As an aside, I thought I'd end by mentioning that (at least in my case) the most difficult to find DC war comic was *Star Spangled War* #5, which sports one of the scarce Korean War covers. DC did only a handful with the Korean War theme. Good luck and happy collecting. ■

JOHNNY DYNAMITE

continued from page 21

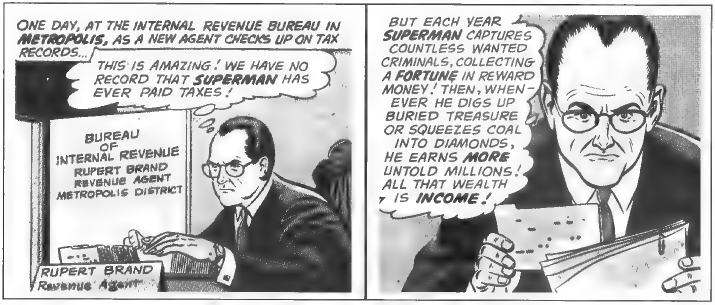
cessful run at buying the rights to the Dynamite character from now-dormant Charlton. They proceeded to treat a new generation of hardboiled comic book readers to *Dynamite* stories in the form of reprints in over a dozen issues of *Ms. Tree*. The experiment proved a mixed blessing for readers, but it sufficiently whetted audiences' appetites that Collins and Beatty were able to sell Dark Horse Comics on the idea of a four issue *Johnny Dynamite* mini series, which appeared in 1994. It was a deliciously over the top Collins Beatty collaboration, a "psychotronic" blast of atomic energy that followed Johnny Dynamite straight to hell in a confrontation with the devil himself! Collins recalled, "The idea was to do a 1950's Mickey Spillane style private eye story that drifted into pure psychotronic country: the world of B-movies, Tor Johnson, Ed Wood, Alison Hayes, and so on."

Collins opined, "That may have been the best Collins-Beatty collaboration, a real culmination of our work. It may be the last major thing we do together. But sales were disappointing, so it doesn't look like there will be another mini series right now." Instead, he hopes to see it collected somewhere into graphic novel format. A bonus of the Dynamite appearances in *Ms. Tree* and in his own mini-series is that they are very inexpensive to collect: it's one advantage to being a crime comics collector in a field that still worships superhero comics, although that is changing, ever so slowly. While the '50s pre-code Dynamite appearances are relatively cheap when you can find them, they are becoming scarce as savvy collectors understand their value to permanent collections. The same could happen in time to the *Ms. Tree* books and the Dark Horse mini-series. Sadly, there hasn't been a *Ms. Tree* comic lately, though Collins teased, "I'm supposed to do a mini-series; the ball is in my court. I need to send in a story description, but I don't have the time right now. I'm directing a movie (*Mommy 2*), doing a new Heller novel, an *NYPD Blue* novel, the *Daylight* novelization, *The Road to Perdition* for Paradox Press, and Mike Danger. There's plenty on my plate!"

Indeed. Let's all yell at Collins through the Danger letter column to find the time to return to *Ms. Tree*, shall we? Meanwhile, Danger, Collins' and Spillane's co-creation has been optioned for big screen filming, which could be a really fun time for PI fans. And as for the *Danger* comic, Collins revealed, "I am now about to do the stuff in Mike Danger that I was going to do in future issues of *Johnny Dynamite*: take the character back to 1952, and do UFO and monster stories."

I think Dynamite would have approved. Or, as he once said, "I'd get them… somehow, I'd watch their faces blubber and drool as I shoved the .45 in their guts. Then I'd pull the trigger and blow out their insides!"

I don't know about you, but I can hardly wait! ■


ONE DAY, AT THE INTERNAL REVENUE BUREAU IN METROPOLIS, AS A NEW AGENT CHECKS UP ON TAX RECORDS...
THIS IS AMAZING! WE HAVE NO RECORD THAT SUPERMAN HAS EVER PAID TAXES!
BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE
RUPERT BRAND
REVENUE AGENT
METROPOLIS DISTRICT
RUPERT BRAND
REVENUE AGENT
BUT EACH YEAR SUPERMAN CAPTURES COUNTLESS WANTED CRIMINALS, COLLECTING A FORTUNE IN REWARD MONEY! THEN, WHENEVER HE DIGS UP BURIED TREASURE OR SQUEEZES COAL INTO DIAMONDS, HE EARNS MORE UNTOLD MILLIONS! ALL THAT WEALTH IS INCOME!

No One Takes Flight From The IRS

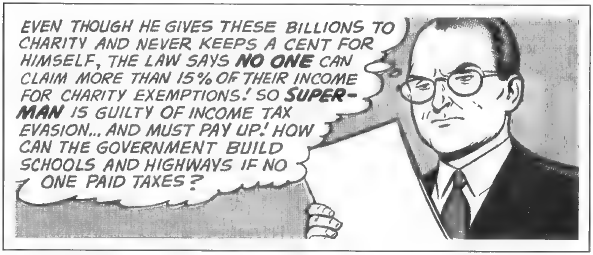
We've just gone by everyone's favorite time of year... tax time! If you're still smarting from your tax bill, consider the plight that challenged none other that Superman. Turns out no one is exempt from the IRS... not even the man of steel!

The evidence for this is an eight-page tale told in *Superman* #148 (October 1961) entitled "Superman Owes A Billion Dollars!" This humorous and unintentionally satiric gem begins with a splash page worthy of the label "classic Silver Age DC."

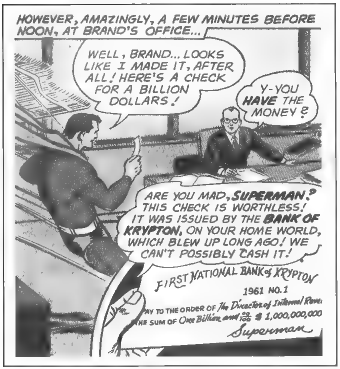
As Superman saves an East Indian potentate from a falling sign, he exclaims, "You grabbed that falling hotel sign in the nick of time, Superman! For saving my life, I will donate my crown jewels to any charity you name!"

Before Superman can reply, IRS agent Rupert Brand shouts out, "He'll name nothing, Superman owes every cent to the U.S. Government. He's a tax evader" So much for free help from ole Supey anymore. These next three panels set the stage for the rest of the humorous pseudo-documentary.

Later, as Superman performs various super-antics for the firemens' welfare fund, the erstwhile Rupert suddenly jumps off a nearby skyscraper (what dedication). Because Superman reveres human life above all else... even the lives of IRS agents and lawyers... Superman safely catches Rupert. Since Rupert has Supe's full attention now, he calls him a tax evader and


EVEN THOUGH HE GIVES THESE BILLIONS TO CHARITY AND NEVER KEEPS A CENT FOR HIMSELF, THE LAW SAYS NO ONE CAN CLAIM MORE THAN 15% OF THEIR INCOME FOR CHARITY EXEMPTIONS! SO SUPERMAN IS GUILTY OF INCOME TAX EVASION... AND MUST PAY UP! HOW CAN THE GOVERNMENT BUILD SCHOOLS AND HIGHWAYS IF NO ONE PAID TAXES?

BY DUANE DIMOCK


HOWEVER, AMAZINGLY, A FEW MINUTES BEFORE NOON, AT BRAND'S OFFICE...
WELL, BRAND... LOOKS LIKE I MADE IT, AFTER ALL! HERE'S A CHECK FOR A BILLION DOLLARS!
Y-YOU HAVE THE MONEY?
ARE YOU MAD, SUPERMAN? THIS CHECK IS WORTHLESS! IT WAS ISSUED BY THE BANK OF KRYPTON, ON YOUR HOME WORLD, WHICH BLEW UP LONG AGO! WE CAN'T POSSIBLY CASH IT!
FIRST NATIONAL BANK of KRYPTON
1961 NO. 1
PAY TO THE ORDER OF The Director of Internal Revenue THE SUM OF One Billion, and 00 $ 1,000,000,000
Superman

DUANE'S WORLD

orders him to pay a billion dollars in back taxes by (gulp) noon of the next day or he'd order (oh, the power those agents used to have) the FBI to arrest him!

Acquiring even a zillion dollars is usually is no problem for the Son of Krypton, except this time, things go wrong (natch!). First, Bizarro shows up and changes all the ivory elephant tusks to Ivory soap, making them worthless. Next, a strange gas temporarily released in the atmosphere suppresses Superman's ability to change coal to diamonds. Then a big hunk of highly valuable radium Supe digs up is needed to stop a deadly epidemic and so, can't be sold. Finally a space creature eats all the other potentially salable treasures Superman has collected. Things look bad for Supe and good for the US tax courts!

Not to be undone by a mere billion dollar debt, Kal-el brings Mr. Brand a check issued by the Bank of Krypton. It's mighty difficult to go there since Krypton kinda blew up. The joke is on Rupert...

All's well that ends well... as Superman prevails once again over even the likes of the Internal Revenue Service! Seems everyone is Superman's dependent which makes for one whopping big deduction!

Overcoming the IRS... that just may be the most "super feat" in comic history! ■

SUDDENLY, AS BRAND'S BOSS ENTERS...
WE'RE NOT GOING TO, BRAND! SUPERMAN TOLD ME ABOUT HIS PROBLEM...AND I TOLD HIM TO MAKE OUT THAT CHECK AS A GAG! HE DOESN'T OWE US A CENT BECAUSE OF CODE 1426 B...
THE TAX DEPENDENCY CLAUSE? BUT SUPERMAN HAS NO FAMILY OR DEPENDENTS!
OH, HASN'T HE? OUR RECORDS SHOW THAT SUPERMAN HAS FOR YEARS SUPPORTED BILLIONS OF NEEDY PEOPLE WITH CLOTHING, HOUSING, FOOD AND PROTECTIVE SERVICE! INDEED, THE WHOLE WORLD IS DEPENDENT ON HIM!
ACCORDING TO LAW, EVERY TAX-PAYER IS ALLOWED TO DEDUCT $600 FOR EACH DEPENDENT! WELL, SUPERMAN HAS OVER TWO BILLION DEPENDENTS! SO IF WE DEDUCTED ALL HIS DEPENDENCY ALLOWANCES FROM HIS INCOMES HE'D HAVE NO TAXABLE INCOME LEFT!
GOSH, I NEVER THOUGHT OF THAT! FORGIVE ME, SUPERMAN! I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN YOU COULDN'T BE A TAX-EVADER!
YOU BET! IF ANYTHING, THE U.S. IS INDEBTED TO SUPERMAN! ONLY THERE ISN'T ENOUGH MONEY IN THE WORLD TO PAY HIM FOR WHAT HE DOES!
THE END

Second Time Around

The Sgt. Rock-Solid Art of Russ Heath

Believe it or not, even so often sitting here at my word processor, I can begin to identify with the characters that I'm writing about. It's 3A.M., the column is already late, I'm miserable and wet (due to the flooding here in Kentucky). I've been ill, and I'm dog tired! I feel like an Easy Company Joe sitting in a fox hole, in the rain and just hoping I can survive until my next three-day pass!

Thankfully, Sgt. Rock isn't about to let me sit around feeling sorry for myself. "HAMBONE!!!" he'd holler (Rock doesn't call anybody by their real name) over the sound of artillery fire, "You get up off your duff and do the research for that column! Don't do it for yourself, do it for them! Do it for *CEM*! Do it for America!"

"On the double, Sarge!!! The following is a detailed list of classic DC war stories that can be found in the Sgt. Rock Special series (1988-1992) that feature artwork by the highly decorated Russ Heath, Sarge" "Attaboy... Private Hambone, now let's get this index rolling... Easy, our work here is done, let's move it out!"

Sgt. Rock Special #5 (September 1989)
'Survivor' 14 pgs. reprinted from *Our Army At War* #258 (7/73)

Sgt. Rock Special #9 (September 1990)
'I'm Killroy' 13 pgs. reprinted from *Our Army At War* #210 (9/69)

Sgt. Rock Special #10 (December 1990)
'A Piece of Rag.. A Hank of Hair' 13 pgs. reprinted from *Our Army At War* #208 (7/69)

Sgt. Rock Special #11, (March 1991)
'Introducing... The Haunted Tank' 18 pgs. reprinted from *G.I. Combat* #87 (5/61)

Sgt. Rock Special #13, (June 1991)
'The Big House of Monsters', 14 pgs. reprinted from *Star Spangled War Stories* #132 (5/67)

Sgt. Rock Special #16, (September 1991)
'Same Old War', 6 pgs. reprinted from *Star Spangled War Stories* #70 (6/58)

Sgt. Rock Special #19, (December 1991)
'Face the Devil', 12 pgs. reprinted from *Our Army At War* #236 (9/71)

Until next time .. "Chest out, eyes front, and company dismissed!" ■

References: Jon Ingersoll's DC Reprint Guide, Mike Tiefenbacher's Index to Star Spangled War Stories.

by Shawn Hamilton, Great Escape - Louisville, Kentucky

Continued from page 27

ROGER: *Do you remember what Harvey's comments were when you turned it in?*

RUSS: Oh, he liked it. I did a couple more things for him. Let's see, I did Plastic Sam for *MAD*. But I only worked for EC as long as Harvey was there. I never did another thing for *MAD* after he left. When Harvey left *MAD*, he got together with his key artists (Severin, Elder, Arnold Roth, Jack Davis, and Woody.) So I was like the first guy on the fringe… just outside of the group. It's too bad… I sometimes wonder where I'd be today had I slipped inside the frame there.

ABOVE: **Sea Devils #3 (Jan/Feb 1962).**
BELOW: **Panel from Sea Devils #1 (Sep/Oct 1961).**

ROGER: *Getting back to Tor… was that the first time you met Joe Kubert?*

RUSS: Yes. I had talked to someone about it and they said that they were needing somebody and were looking around for some help. I think it was through Maurer. So I went over to Norman's office and he said "Let's see your portfolio." About that time Joe Kubert came walking into the office and said that wouldn't be necessary, which I thought was very complimentary. Of course they looked at the stuff anyway.

The 3-D thing was an immense amount of physical labor. It was all done on cels with acetate inking. Then whiting it out. They had people to white in the back of it. Working with acetate ink on acetate is one of the lousiest ways to draw, that I can think of. We had to work out the different background planes and what was supposed to go where. Then I did a few filler pages on my own.

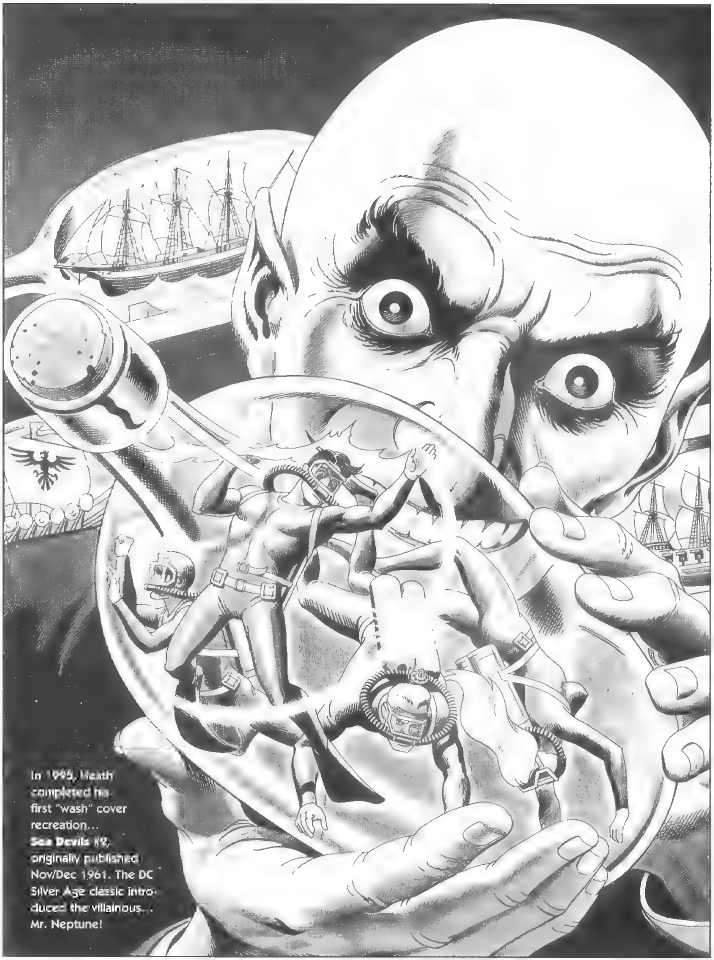
ROGER: *You did a lot of horror jobs while you were at Timely/Atlas. I wanted to ask you if there was anybody specifically who directed you on the horror cover assignments and were there any special guidelines that you were told to follow?*

RUSS: There weren't any real guidelines. Of course that was the height of popularity for the EC horror line. Sometimes we used to discuss what the cover would be. In some cases, I used to get layouts and I would ink those. But most of them were mine. You remember they used to have the three little "sidecar" boxes that were supposed to be representative of the stories in the book, plus the titles too? They would never send me information on what the stories were about so I used to just make these up.

ROGER: *Didn't they at least give you the titles?*

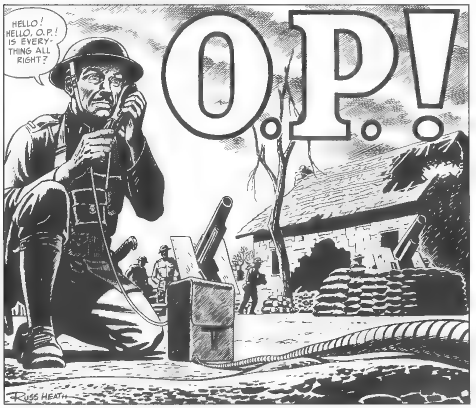
RUSS: Yes. They would say, OK, here's the cover and here are the scenes from the other stories, but they wouldn't tell me what they were about. I would just take the title and if it said, you know, "bloody moon" or something like that, I would just draw a bloody moon. Sometimes it would come out looking as if there were no relationship between the little drawings and the titles.

Sea Devils Dane Dorrance and Judy Walton are menaced by a shark in Heath's first Sea Devils issue… Showcase #27 (Aug 1960).



In 1995, Heath completed his first "wash" cover recreation... **Sea Devils** #2, originally published Nov/Dec 1961. The DC Silver Age classic introduced the villainous... Mr. Neptune!

ROGER: *I collect-a lot of the Atlas horror books and I've noticed that. I also collect your original Atlas horror/mystery covers and I wanted to ask you specifically about one of them. It's a* Spellbound *cover, and shows a guy and a girl in a graveyard with a tentacled creature grabbing the guy around the neck. On the original, I can see that the woman's breast has obviously been reworked to reduce the size of it. It's a pre-code cover so I was kind of surprised to see it altered.*



Panels from the classic EC World War I story "O.P.!" (Frontline Combat #1, Jul/Aug 1951) by Kurtzman & Heath. Note the use of detail, closeups, and "sound effects" to achieve realism.

RUSS: Well, it's self-censorship. They said "that's too big." I always resisted censoring myself because I felt, if they're going to do it, then I have to make it bigger so it ends up the size I want it to be in the first place (*laughter*). Otherwise, they'll start taking sweat off the forehead of a guy hitting a baseball.

ROGER: *What was Timely's policy on keeping original art when you worked there in the '50s.*

RUSS: They just kept everything. Eventually, years later, it was discovered that they were storing it. Nobody had even thought to ask, you know. Then they were found to be throwing it out.

One time, I think it was Neal Adams, walked in to National one day and saw this guy tearing sheets in half and dumping them. I think he raised a big stink about it. I don't know what they were frightened of back in those days. I guess they figured that the stuff might get reprinted without their permission and somebody would make money off it

I know for a long time they didn't want the artists talking with the writers. Even today it's the same in the animation world. The writers are kept separate because I think they figure that if we talked to the writers, pretty soon we'd start acting like writers and wanting our own parking spaces… let alone more money.

ROGER: *Let's talk a little bit about the war comics work you've done over the past 37 years. You've done such an incredible amount of work and your drawings are renowned for their accuracy and realism.*

RUSS: After World War II there was very little research being done. Nobody knew what the heck a Tiger tank or the uniforms looked like… or anything else. They thought what was in the movies was real. And of course the movies only used American tanks with crosses on them as just one example.

I think it was a good ten or fifteen years before people started getting interested in war history. The veterans began getting together to rehash old battles. Then they started all the series of books in the '60s, which contained great photographs. They opened up the British and the German archives and got a wealth of actual photos

Then I started my own research. You really begin to know what you're drawing after you do the research. Of course that was taken to ridiculous levels occasionally. Sometimes I'd get these letters from kids who said, "You had this P-40E in the story and the P-40E didn't come out until September of that year and so you should have been drawing the P-40D."

ROGER: *Around 1956 or 1957 you started the "Golden Gladiator" feature in* G.I. Combat. *Did that require research?*

RUSS: That did require a fairly good amount of hard research. I didn't have much material on the period at the time, but they liked what I did. I added some little touches with a Hal Foster feeling. I did a few Robin Hoods and a few Silent Knights. Then we went into the *Sea Devils* thing. I did a lot of wash covers for *Sea Devils* (even some wash covers with Sgt. Rock). I think I did the first ten covers of *Sea Devils*, or something like that, give or take two or three. Then it was taken over by somebody else. Around 1965 I moved to Chicago and worked pretty much exclusively on Little Annie Fanny.

ROGER: *Howard Purcell did a lot of the wash covers after you left* Sea Devils. *Both of you guys did a good job on those wash covers… they're considered classics by many collectors.*

RUSS: I really felt that the work suffered because what they did was put color over the wash. And of course gray and any color makes mud. So I thought, well, if you want to do a halftone thing, you might as well do it in color. I felt it was a ridiculous way to work.

ROGER: *I take it then that it wasn't your idea to do wash covers?*

RUSS: No. I think Sol Harrison dreamed it up… or somebody like that They were always trying various things from time to time. It was amazing.

ROGER: *How about your work at Western Publishing?*

RUSS: I did a couple of stories, four or five stories actually, through Gil Kane for Western Publishing… the coloring was really nice on some of those Western gave us many more ranges of color to use than DC. They

were doing those movie things you know. Gil pencilled and I inked and then one time he couldn't finish the pencils so I finished the second half of the book by myself. It was *Tales of Wells Fargo*. I think we did two books of that and then there was another comic based on another western television series

ROGER: *Did the wash covers really require a lot of extra work?*

RUSS: It was extra work, but I don't recall whether or not they paid extra. They tended not to pay much… it was amazing. When I was in Chicago and left Playboy, I was doing Sgt. Rock by mail. My rates, because I wasn't in town to know what the rates were, were still running around $53 a page. It was taking me three weeks to do a seven page story. So you take seven times $53 for three weeks and you know I was starving to death.

ROGER: *Around 1966, while at DC, you did a two part series in* Star Spangled War Stories *which was about a child who was raised on a lost island by pterodactyls. Later on he was rescued and eventually went on to become a World War II flying ace. Due to your art and the story idea, it's considered to be one of the more popular short series that DC ever presented.*

RUSS: I do remember doing some pterodactyls, but I can't really recall the thing itself now. You know, they're never going to be able to have a complete list of what I've done because there's just so many… I mean there was an outfit called Fox… I even did some stuff for them.

ROGER: *A lot of people collect Fox books. They published quite a variety of different comics.*

RUSS: Yes. I think they put out a *MAD*-type of book that I did some stuff for. They went out of business and a lot of guys got hung up for money owed them. When I heard of them possibly going under, I sent them a bill offering a 15% discount… knowing the way accountants think. If accountants are dividing up what's left among the people they owe, they'll put the money where it'll go the furthest. So I sent them a bill offering them a 15% discount for cash in 10 days and got my money. And of course you can take the discount off as a business expense. So I guess I'm one of the few that got paid

were no war stories together. The first jobs I did when I started on the Sgt. Rock thing… I pretty much aped his style. But that ended after the first or second issue I had done. I did that because I wanted to get a lot of the same flavor into it.

ROGER: *That Burroughs job was a Korak story which appeared toward the end of the DC series. Did you ever have aspirations to do the Tarzan syndicated strip?*

RUSS: Well, of course I loved and collected all the Hal Foster pages. I don't know whatever happened to them. They would be worth a fortune today. I cut out the Sunday pages and kept them. I had most of them and the big little books and so on. Then somewhere along the way, probably when I went into the service, it seems a lot of my stuff disappeared.

Probably my father trying to help me grow up.

Then Hogarth took it over and I didn't care for his work on it. I was much too literal to appreciate Hogarth. He'd have these leaping figures that weren't leaping and so on. So I got out of the Tarzan thing entirely. Then they had the daily strip which was kind of uninspiring. So I never really thought about it. It would have been a neat assignment but I would have tried to do it in the same heroic way that Foster did it.

ROGER: *If I remember correctly, your work started to show up in the DC war books around 1952 or so. Just recently I spotted a couple of your early stories that were unsigned and looked as if Joe Kubert had pencilled and you had inked. Did you do any collaboration work with Joe?*

RUSS: No, I didn't do any in collaboration with him. I did an Edgar Rice Burroughs story with Joe where he pencilled and I inked, but there

It was amazing to find out years later that Foster didn't care for Tarzan at all. That really freaked me out when I heard that. But after a few years of doing Prince Valiant he really hit his mark. It was thrilling to just look at his stuff.

ROGER: *Some collectors feel you "hit your mark" with Sgt. Rock.*

RUSS: Well, when I started on the Sgt. Rock thing I suppose you could say I was doing average work. Then I started trying to do some really superb jobs. I figured, you know, I wasn't making much money and I always thought that I never wanted to become a hack. So I tried to make each job better than the last one… and to do something innovative.

Of course this was being noted by the people waiting for the packages every three weeks to see what I had done. So I became slower and slower just because I was trying so hard.

Then when I started on the Lone Ranger syndicated strip, I found that the slow approach meant I couldn't keep up with doing six dailies and a Sunday. So then I started working faster which allowed me to start back to work at Marvel from nine to five.

ROGER: *What process do you follow when you work on a project?*

RUSS: The first thing I'd do is sit down and do the thumbnails of the pages. In other words, the pages would be about an inch and a half tall. I'd do stick figures so that I'd know where the balloons went, the size of the panel, and where the figures were going to be. Then I would hand letter in the lettering on the original and my lettering man would come over and letter them in. So I'd be sitting there with these pages with the lettering finished, with blank paper and my thumbnails. I'd start at 6 AM on the six dailies, pencil and ink those, take them over and get them xeroxed, then bring them home and wrap them and get them off in the mail by 5 PM. So I did the six dailies in virtually twelve hours or so. Then I would do the Sunday, which would be another whole day because it would be ten panels After that I would have to do the color which would be another hour or two. That's about as fast as I've ever heard of anybody doing anything like that.

ROGER: *Does is take longer for you to pencil or ink a page?*

RUSS: It takes me longer to ink. When I'm penciling for myself any face that's smaller than a half inch won't have any features in it. It would just be an oval. I put in the detail when I ink it.

to work large now. To me the panel borders are like a window… and if the window's larger, I can look farther out to my left and to my right… behind the edges of the window so to speak. In other words, I have a bigger picture out there and I can see more. If you make the window smaller, it's like stepping back six feet and I can't see out of it as well. I don't shoot around to the sides, or up and down so much. Instead of having a wide field of vision, it's more like tunnel vision.

Of course you've also got problems in a larger panel of making a sweeping line. Let's say for example on a girl's flowing hair, which may have to be three or four inches long. That's tough to maintain.

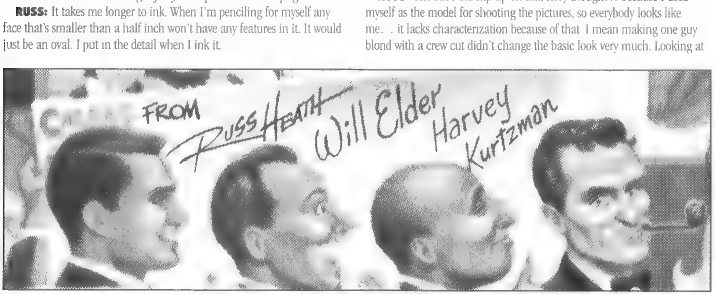
One of the masters of that is Stan Drake when he does *The Heart of Juliet Jones*. He does those panels huge. I watched him doing it one day and he makes these five or six inch strokes. It's incredible.

ROGER: *Have you ever tried your hand at watercolors or oil paint ing?*

RUSS: Just an odd job here and there. There was one watercolor thing where I did an imitation of a Petty girl drawing for *MAD Magazine*. Most people think that was airbrush, probably because Petty used an airbrush Then of course the Little Annie Fanny's were watercolors, not used in a watercolor technique but more like using designers' colors or something. I've done maybe two oils in my life. I never mastered the medium I suppose if I started now it would take a couple of years to become comfortable with it

ROGER: *You worked for Warren magazines over the years. I think the first story you did for them appeared in* Blazing Combat *#4 around 1966 sometime. It was a beautiful wash tone job called "Give and Take"*

RUSS: Yes, but I did slip up on that story though… because I used myself as the model for shooting the pictures, so everybody looks like me… it lacks characterization because of that I mean making one guy blond with a crew cut didn't change the basic look very much. Looking at



Heath, Elder, Kurtzman, and Hefner are self-caricatured in Little Annie Fanny. FACING PAGE: **Major America and Wondrous Woman gather around the Bat-Pole.**

ROGER: *What type of paper do you prefer working on?*

RUSS: Three ply Strathmore. Not the smooth slippery finish.

ROGER: *When the industry changed over to the new smaller sized pages back in 1968, did you have any problems adjusting to the new format?*

RUSS: Yes, I did at the time, although I'd probably find it very difficult it afterwards, I thought I was a little heavy to be a hero.

ROGER: *Several comic art aficionados have suggested it is among the best work ever done. That issue of* Blazing Combat *is very collectible now.*

RUSS: I tried to do a showpiece It's ironic that almost everybody did about their best story in the same issue, or close to it. I spent about a month… I went down and I rented some fatigues. I had my steel helmet and bayonet and a fake grenade. I bought the webbed belt and the canteen. Then I contacted one of the photographers from Playboy and on a weekend we went down to their studio and took over 40 shots of me. I don't

think I would ever use myself as a model again because I had to look over in the mirror to see what I looked like, which makes it very hard to get a side shot of your face. I think I still have the photos.

I did another war story that was almost up to that level... nearer to it than anything else. That story was done for a group called Atlas/Seaboard

in the mid '70s, and was apparently destroyed .. so, regrettably, no one will ever see it

They went defunct... I don't know if it was a misunderstanding between the managers and the owners or what. The work was ready to go in the next issue but there wasn't any next issue, and so that work knocked around for awhile. Some of it was apparently destroyed, or taken home or stolen.

I did some Warren type of jobs for them I did a police story, about a retired guy in a wheelchair. That one got used but the war story never saw the light of day. No one seems to know what happened to it but I did hear rumors that it had been torn up. I also did a cover I think it showed some tubes forming out of these people. It was kind of a futuristic type thing. The police story was done in wash.

ROGER: *What was Jim Warren like to work with?*

RUSS: Well, when I first met him of course, he was the backer of *Help* magazine when I was working for Harvey. We had a little trouble, a misunderstanding. So I told Harvey K. that I would never set foot in his offices again... or rather in Warren's office and studios again. But I wouldn't be so bullheaded as to not take his money and if Harvey wanted to meet on neutral ground I would still do jobs, because this was a personal thing. So Harvey got very upset over that and said he'd think it over, but nothing came along for a number of years. About a year or two later I met Warren in a bar and he was very nice and I just don't hold grudges so I figured that's long enough. I got robbed once in a hotel at a convention in New York and he shelled out $200 cash on the spot to me which helped me immensely

ROGER: *You were robbed at a comic book convention?*

RUSS: Right. They hit my room

ROGER: *Did they take any artwork?*

RUSS: No, they threw that on the floor. It was in the way to get to the money. Anyway, I went back to New York in... 1972 or 1973 working for DC and *National Lampoon*. I guess being back into New York is how I got back to Warren again. Carmine was up at DC. That's a period where the history overlaps so much that it's hard to tell just what you did and when you did it.

ROGER: Creepy *#105 (February 1979) has an interesting story by you which must have been fun to do. It was called "Dime Novel Hero" and featured a werewolf and a familiar looking masked man who comes in during the last few panels and puts a silver bullet through the beast.*

RUSS: They gave me three scripts to pick from... I'd go for the one that appealed to me and turn the other two back, which was kind of neat. So I thought it was too good a thing... in all these years nobody had ever worked this silver bullet bit out. To me it was just so funny. There was always some kind of a bizarre twist to those stories.

ROGER: *How did you get tied into doing Little Annie Fanny?*

RUSS: I was close to Harvey Kurtzman, all the way through his career more or less, so when he sold the idea of Annie Fanny to Hefner, he called all of his artists pals to help put the thing together. Of course he was closer to Willie (Elder) than anybody else I guess. Then he called in Jack Davis. Jack I think was busy in the beginning because I know I had to fly out to Chicago and try to put this character together with Willie and Harvey

ROGER: *You helped in the very beginning stages of the development of Annie?*

RUSS: Yes. That's where I got to know Al Jaffee .. the guy who for so many years did the back covers of *MAD* that folded up I think that was the original group of us who went to Chicago to do that. I think it started in 1962 and at that point I was flying back and forth.

ROGER: *I had no idea that you and others were called to Chicago to meet and develop this thing. Most of us have always thought it was just Elder and Kurtzman at the very beginning.*

RUSS: We did the first job out there together and then we kept flying back and forth. We'd be out there two or three weeks and then fly back. Sometimes one of us would stay to finish up.

ROGER: *They never did credit anybody except Kurtzman and Elder on the first story... and several others after that.*

RUSS: There was absence of credit. I know they always gave Willie and Harvey credit. Sometimes it was on the masthead and then sometimes it was signed at the end of the story.

They tried a number of guys. At one point they finally got Jack Davis. I know they tried Paul Coker, Jr., and I had to do a great deal of fixing up because Paul is so individualistic. His stuff just didn't look like Annie. Then they had Arnold Roth and I had to do a great deal of fixing up because his stuff didn't look right either. Eventually Harvey went through most of the guys that he was close to with the exception of Wally Wood who never did any.

ROGER: *I'll bet they tried to get Wally though...*

RUSS: Probably. Then they finally got Jack Davis in and by that time, I don't think Al Jaffee was in on more than one or two. You know, they had such poor luck with these other people It was like there was an "A" artist

and two "B" artists. In other words, it's like the first story will be done by Willie who is the "A" artist and he and I would do the first story, then he and Jack Davis might do the second story and so on like that. So while Willie worked on them all, I never worked on one that Jack Davis worked on, outside of an occasional touch or something.

ROGER: *What was the reasoning behind that approach?*

RUSS: Hefner wanted it to be in every issue, and I think the best we ever did was an eight-pager at one time, a Christmas story where we put Willie, myself, Hugh and Harvey into the last panel. But Hugh wanted Annie to be in every issue and we didn't even come close

We did a lot of pages that particular year, but it was just too big a thing. They were too complicated. If you ever had the chance to look at one of the originals, you'd realize Annie Fanny's are painted like the Sistine Chapel. Willie's entire output by himself was twelve pages a year! So it became a three-pagers a quarter.

This "fan book" drawing by Heath is a rare combination of the Haunted Tank and the Golden Gladiator.

ROGER: *Whenever you other guys were needed to work on it, they had to fly you to Chicago?*

RUSS: We did a lot of work there, but we had to get the OK from Hefner. First the black and whites, you know, with his marginal notes that Harvey would get OK'd. Then Harvey would get the color OK'd by Hef, and there would be more marginal notes and then you'd just go with the originals and even in the final stages there would still be more revisions and approvals.

Harvey came to use me a lot. First of all because I thought somewhat like Hefner as far as the art was concerned, and he could use me as a sounding board to test what Hefner was going to think of any particular thing.

It fell to me to do a lot of fixing up on the stuff. I used to sit there with an electric eraser and take out two thirds of a panel without destroying the surface of the paper.

ROGER: *When you were working on a story with Will Elder on Annie, did you do most of the penciling or the inking?*

RUSS: Sometimes Willie would do the first two panels . I'd do the second two, and Willie would do the last two. Or I'd take the left hand side of the page and Willie would take the right. So we'd physically cut the page apart and do it that way, then put it together later.

It was incredible… when you start cutting those things up. I got really hacked one morning when I was in New York trying to finish up the stuff. I had been up all night, I was in my undershorts and I called Harvey and I said, "It's done Harvey, it's 8 AM, I haven't been to bed, and it's done. Do you want to come and get it?"

So he blasted out of his house and he shows up with all his kids. I opened the door and here come his daughters running in, and I'm standing there in my underwear. I thought he could have warned me. Here I've got all these panels of tissue overlays… all sticking together with tape… and just a terrible mess. So then one of his kids took my telescope, unbeknownst to me, and ran it into the bathroom, and took it apart, and flushed the lenses down the toilet. I was kind of upset about that.

I sat there and looked at the mess. I'd just been practically exposed and so I waited until he got home and I called him up and told him how mad I was. I said "I've been asking you for a raise for a long time, and, you know, I've had it, that's it." So Harvey got hysterical. He called Hefner and then he called me back later and they doubled my salary.

Later I went to quit again… I was in Chicago at the time, and Hefner said "I know you like Chicago and you hate New York. If you stay on, I'll move you out to Chicago and give you my old office to work in." So I took that. It had a dressing room and a full refrigerator… and a bar… etc.

ROGER: *Did Playboy cover your expenses when you worked in Chicago?*

RUSS: They picked up everything. I would stay at the Playboy mansion.

ROGER: *You stayed at the mansion…with the bunnies?!!!*

RUSS: With however many might have been staying there at any particular time, yes. Well, I just figured that things were bound to get better, so I hung on… with a stiff upper lip.

ROGER: *What kind of rates were they paying you to work on Annie after they doubled your salary?*

RUSS: I think that when they doubled it I was making $500 a week, or maybe it was $500 a page, I can't recall. I know that the pages eventually became worth… between the lettering man and Harvey and everybody's efforts, over $4,000 a page… which at the time was one of the highest priced features in the magazine. It didn't make anybody rich, that's for sure.

ROGER: *It sounds like the Annie Fanny work paid better than the comic work for DC or Marvel*

RUSS: Well, of course it'll never be anything like doing an advertising spot or something. I know I got contacted one time… they wanted three advertisements which were to be based on some of the old comic characters. The ads were take-offs of, let's see, one was a take off on Tarzan, and

one was on Flash Gordon, and I forget what the other one was. They wanted characters that looked enough like the original so we knew who it was supposed to be and not enough like them so they could get sued. It was sort of a tongue-in-cheek thing and they were to be done in regular comic book black and white panel format. They paid $800 apiece

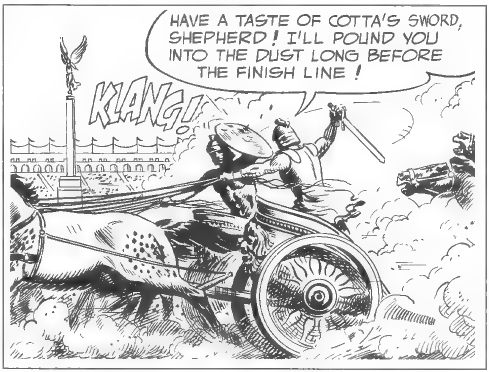
finished up everything I had to do. I found out afterwards that apparently I was working twice as fast as anybody else and could have been there twelve weeks if I had just I slowed down. The movie I was working on for him was American Pop.

Then I went to work for Filmation. Filmation is one the larger outfits out here. There were always seasonal breaks and what I would usually do during those breaks is go to work for one of the other houses that were still operating.

ROGER: *What did you work on at Filmation?*

RUSS: The animated Lone Ranger feature. The thing about animation is that you do this stuff and it disappears down the tube in the making of the film and is not really seen by anyone. So you don't have any of the thrill of seeing your stuff in print… of a fandom… or any of that sort of thing. It's just used up during the process of making the film. Animation is like meat cutting. You are earning a salary. I always felt a little guilty about that. I really wasn't doing anything artistic.

ROGER: *You've certainly turned out a lot of great work over the past 45 years Russ and I think your fans realize too, that you've never compromised your style in all that time. You've always consistently done your best*



A very rare Russ Heath original from Brave & Bold #1. The original art from the early issues of B&B is highly sought after by collectors and is extremely difficult to find.

ROGER: *That's definitely good money!*

RUSS: Of course, freelancers get a piece in here and a piece in there. You've got to average it out. What most guys try to do is get one client who supplies as much of the heavy money end of it as they can.

ROGER: *What have you been doing since the mid 1970s.*

RUSS: Well, I came out to California in 1978 to work for Hanna Barbera. I was doing layout work… which is kind of hard to describe.

ROGER: *Was it sort of like doing animation story boards?*

RUSS: Similar, except the story boards were already done. What I was doing was more completed drawings. You know, large frame sized drawings rather than story board concepts. These were done in preparation for the final cel to be done from.

They would shoot them and put them on cels and send them over to do all the rest of it. Probably the best explanation of it that was printed up was done by Alex Toth. It explains animation from head to toe. If I could look that up I'd be able to explain it better.

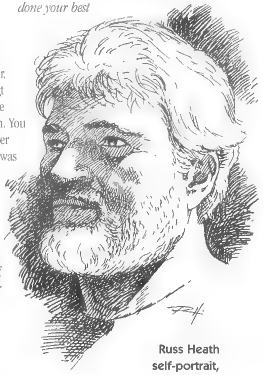
Then there was a strike and I went over to work for Ralph Bakshi. He had heard of me… he was a comics fan and knew of my work through comics. So when he heard I was available, I guess he knew without looking what to expect.

ROGER: *How long did you work for Hanna Barbera?*

RUSS: I think I had been there a year or so before I went over to Bakshi… not very long actually. I think I was only there six weeks until I

and that means a lot to the people out here who appreciate it.

RUSS: You know Roger, back when I was doing Sgt Rock, I was trying to make each one a collector's item. You know, make each one better than the last one. My pay was less than most people during that same period who were doing as much work, because I did not… would not… just knock it out. My feeling was if I became one of these hacks, I would never be able to do anything decent again, it would become a permanent way of working and I didn't want that.



Russ Heath self-portrait, date unknown.

ROGER: *Thanks Russ for doing it your way! I appreciate your taking the time to talk with me these Sunday mornings. Good luck with all your future projects… and your tennis!*

RUSS: Thank you! ■

Collectors focus on Fiction House & pre-Code Horror

The flurry of activity that began right before the release of the Guide, and flows into the spring convention season, is now in mid-stride. Overstreet "Big Book" has been released, and collectors and investors are checking to see if their investment instincts were right. Some titles and key issues took a mild but significant jump upward. Few of the collectors and dealers that I talk to report that there is a move toward one or two particular areas. On the contrary, interest remains extremely diverse, and that is why this hobby continues to be so great.

Pre Golden Age/Golden Age (1933-45)

While the prices escalate and collectors continue to hunt down the number one issues or first appearances of a given character. There is a quiet and growing segment of the hobby that is hunting down the "second" issue or "second appearances". Detective #28, Whiz #3, SubMariner #2, Mystery Men #2, Hit #2 have all been the focus of above normal collector interest.

Sales: Bill Barnes #1 FN/VF $380; Captain Midnight #1 FN $750; Comic Cavalcade #24 VG $150; Crack Comics #2 FN $635; Detective #59 FN $550; Green Giant #1 D $920; Green Mask #1 GD $350; Hit #2 FN+ $780; Li'l Abner #4 VG/FN $225; Mystery Men #2 FN++ $840; Marvel Mystery #21 FN $540; Rocket Kelly #2 VF $150; Spy Smasher #1 FN/FN+ $980; SubMariner #2 GD $650 ; Top Notch #9 app FN $995; Thrilling #19 VF/NM $500.

Post Golden Age/Pre Silver Age (1946-56)

Well, where to begin? Again, diversity sums it up best... especially for late forties and early fifties esoterics. This era is experiencing rapid growth and increased interest for many different reasons. There are great bargains to be had, un-attributed artwork, newly discovered rarities, plus the ever-favorite elements of violence, sex, and congressional censorship. We collectors and historians can't really ask for much more than that, can we?

Demand for Fiction House titles is growing steadily... with especially keen interest in early issues, anything with Matt Baker art, and those great Bob Lubber's "Wings" covers. The growing list of FH "icon" covers is bringing this publisher to new highs of collector focus. Also demand for pre-code crime and horror titles remains high with more and more collectors branching out into this area. Although high does command premiums, mid grade is also selling well at above Guide levels.

Sales: Babe #1 FN $80; Crime & Punishment #3 FN 475; Detective #151 VF/NM $550; Exposed #6 FN $100; Exciting #51 FN $210; Hollywood Secrets #1 FN $95; Journey into Mystery #2 VG $200; March of Comics (#3) FN $185; Our Army at War #1 G/VG $350; Our Fighting Forces #1 GD $120; Phantom Lady #23 VG $1,700; Rangers #36 VF/NM $135; Thrilling #65 VF/NM $350; Wonder Woman #43 VF $240; Women Outlaws #1 FN $225; Zegra #2 FN $185, Zoot #10 VF $355.

Silver Age (1956-69)

The messages continue to be mixed. On one hand, there is a large group lobbying for a price adjustment (downward) on the mid-grade Marvel Silver, and a few post 1965 DC titles. On the other hand, few sellers lowered their prices last year, noting a rekindling of interest in this very material. They report prices and sales not too far from Guide levels in all grades. Perhaps the increased competition to provide great customer service among a number of dealers explains this.

Sales: Action Comics #252 GD $98, #282 FN $55; All American Men of War #82 VF/NM $150; Aquaman #1 FN $275; Amazing Spider-Man #50 FN $160; Batman #139 VF $165; Captain America #300 NM $350; Detective #225 VG $1,450; Flash #105 app VF $2,000; Green Lantern #4 VF/NM $350; Hulk #2 FN/VF $1,400; Jimmy Olsen #3 FN $200; Lois Lane #1 FR $120; Our Army at War *Continued on page 76*

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The first two of the year's larger conventions have come and gone with interesting results. Orlando's MegaCon was a snappy, sparsely attended show with most dealers reporting above average sales, perhaps because of a rather large and undersold dealer's room.

I found the opposite to be true at Motor City Con, which was packed with every conceivable type of dealer with wares ranging from blowout overstock for a dime each. . to video, swords and an incredible assortment of Gold and Silver Age.

The consensus among dealers that I spoke with was that the con was oversold, sales were down, and the space too competitive. One art dealer said he smelled fear in the air for the summer shows . . while another remarked that he couldn't break a.l the hundred dol ar bills coming his way.

Regardless, any show that packs in the attendance like this one is a rare bird (Saturday was wall-to-wall people) and Mike Goldman has really done a super job of building this con to one of the largest in the country. Our overall sales were down, but I was impressed at the quality of the production and the diversity and quantity of merchandise.

As promised last month, the rest of this report will be our March auction results, broken into five categories. Bear in mind the prices listed include the buyer's fee and winning bids in transit are not included. As you will see, bargains were abundant and high grade ruled

Continued on page 76

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Continued from page 74

Golden Age

All Funny #1, VF- $128, All Select #11, Fine+ $566; Almanac of Crime #1, VG $98; Black Hood #11, Fair $31; Black Hood #16, F $67; Capt. Aero #26, Fair $74; Capt. Marvel #82, VF+ $160; Capt. Midnight #35 (Dble. cvr.), VF/NM $162; Doc Savage Vol. 2 #3, F $166; Face #2, F/VF $118, Firehair #1 (Colorado, F $110, Flash #20, F- $334, Four Most #38 (Ohio), NM- $97, Heart Throbs #3 (File), VF $31; Marvel Mystery #69, VF- $432; Marvel Mystery #81, VF+ $545, Moon Girl #1, VG- $183; Moon Girl #4, F+ $134; My Date #2, Fair $25; Outlaws of the West #1 (Kubert Coll.), VG+ $93; Phantom Lady #14 (Ohio), E $586; Prize #1, App F/VF $314; Speed #2, G- $64; Supersnipe Vol. 2 #1, VG/F $179; Target Western #107, F- $39, Terrors of the Jungle #18 (Colorado), VF+ $242, Top Notch #14, App. VF $214, True War #2,4 (File) NM- $58, Weird #12, G/VG- $55, Whiz #154, VG $77, Wow #53 (Colorado), VF/NM+ $106

1950's Horror/Sci-Fi

Astonishing #63, VF $50; Baffling Mysteries #18, (Circle 8) VF/NM $138, Baffling Mysteries #21 (Circles), F/VF $52, Beyond #11 (Circle 8), F+ $34; Beyond #12 (Circle 8), VF+ $39, Black Magic #1, VF/NM $391, Capt. Science #7, F- $110; Spellbound #11, VG- $31, Strange Mysteries #21, VG+ $28; Voodoo #2, VF $185

Silver Age

Am. Spider-Man #9, VF $586, Am. Spider-Man #94, NM- $60; Am. Spider-Man #96, NM- $73; Avengers #4, VF (Trimmed) $625; Am. Spider-Man Ann. #1, VF/NM $618; FF #99, VF/NM $121, FF #48, NM- $774, Flash #110, VG $239; G.I. Combat #65 (Kubert Coll.), VG $237, Jungle Tales of Tarzan #1, NM- $31, JLA #1, F+ $872; Love Romances #83, F $19; Love Romances #99, F+ $25, Love Romances #102, VG $29; Millie #37, VF/NM $27, Mystery In Space #53, Fair $66, Patsy Q-Size #1, NM $55

Modern Comics

Batman #255, NM- $34, DC Comics Superpack, NM $30, Iron Fist #14, NM- $106, Love Rockets b/w #1, VF/NM $28, Magilla Gorilla #1, VF $33, Mr. Natural #1, VF- $52, My Love Special #1, NM- $44, Vampirella #113, VF+ $130, Young Love #107, F+ $41

Memorabilia & Vintage Paper

Circle of Guilt HC 1st, NM- $80; Dark Legend HC, VG/F 3rd $49, Der Fuehrer's Face Sheet Music 1942, F $107; Fox Tattoos 1944, VG $44, Funny Valentine Unopened Box $192, Leatherbound Overstreet #14, NM $44, Leatherbound Overstreet #16, NM $44; Moving Picture Stories #802, F $92; North Paper Giveaways 1933, VF $166; Star Trek V box $45, Superman 1966 Pb Secret of the Mad Dictator, NM $31, Tiny Tim Mag. '68, NM- $11, Uncut cvrs. lot Blazing #5 and Red Circle #4, NM- $44.

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Hello and welcome to sunny and very warm central Florida. Our month has been active via mail order customers but just average at the store. Comic conventions have been hit or miss

Silver Age (1955-1969)

DC Silver has sold well in recent weeks, especially war comics. Amazing Spider-Man still leads the Marvel pack with many low grade sales this month. We have customers waiting for certain books that have not come our way. As usual we still have to discount too many comics in order to enjoy a reasonable turnover. Ads and Internet postings especially bring out the bargain hunters. Overall, I feel the Overstreet Price Guide has to adjust many of the listings to better reflect the reality of retailing.

Sales: Amazing Spider-Man #2 fair $95, #122 NM $95; X-Men #3 FN $175, Green Lantern #17 VF $45, Batman #147 VF $50, Star Trek #6 VF $95

SCHIFFMAN CONT.

#81 VG $680; Rip Hunter #6 NM $110; SubMariner #1 VF/NM $120; Strange Adventures #120 FN $120; Strange Tales #135 VF $100; X-Men #3 VG $135; X-Men #14 VF/NM $185; Wonder Woman #105 VF/NM $700; World's Finest #88 NM $250.

Bronze Age (1970-79)

The other day I visited a store that is devoted entirely to "popular culture" and memorabilia. It was packed, and I had just left an empty comic store one block away. The only comics they carried and that sold well for them were late '60s and '70s titles. Could this be the first time, baring a few exceptions (Westerns, Peanuts, 4-Color) that comics have really crossed over? Previous to this, I'd yet to hear of a comic dealer selling Star Wars at Guide (Av. $22 ea), while this memorabilia shop owner couldn't keep them in stock. Spider-Man, Warlord, PowerMan and Batman sold very, very well for them.

Adventure #435 NM $10; Amazing Spider-Man #120 VF/NM $28; Bat Lash #1 VF/NM $32; Batman #232 VF $38; Champion Sports #1 VF/NM $15; DC Super Spectacular #20 VF/NM $35.00; Devil Dinosaur #1 NM $8; First Issue Special #4 VF/NM $12; Legion of Superheroes #1 VF/NM $20; Marvel Spotlight #28 VF/NM $14; Night Nurse #4 VF/NM $40; Phantom #72 NM $16; Phantom Stranger #23 VF/NM $18; Strange Sports Stories #1 NM $16; Supergirl #1 VF/NM $22; Superfriends #1 NM $18; Tarzan #207 NM $12 Mod Wheels #1 VF $12; Unknown Soldier #219 NM $10; Warlord #1 VF/NM $12; Where Creatures Roam #1 VF/NM $18; Wonder Woman #211 VF $22.

On a final note, toys and memorabilia in general is huge... and the potential benefits to the comic hobby is great. A whole new population of "new blood" is entering the hobby "through the back door" as interest in popular collectibles memorabilia in general continues its upward rise in popularity. The nostalgia collectibles are really part of one giant hobby complex... for proof, consider that "Hulk on a Rope" and the matching towel set sells quickly at $75... and comics will always be the "parents" of these progeny. The biggest dealers are becoming deeply involved in a number of offshoots, and whether comic book purists like it or not, we will see more and more of this stuff at "comic conventions". Be prepared! ■

Golden Age (1935-1955)

We purchased a small but impressive group that includes Batman, More Fun, World's Finest and a handful of high grade Dell Giants. We have been able to place most of these books in collections just working off of our computerized want list. These books were purchased at a very favorable rate and allowed us to price them accordingly.

We also bought a handful of mid grade Timelys but had to pay 75% of Guide – thus we will be pricing this group above Guide in order to ensure a reasonable mark up. It is very seldom now-a-days that I pay that high a percentage, however Timelys hold a warm spot in my heart.

We have sold a few lower grade books this month also. Demand continues for key issues that just don't show up very often. I wonder if these collectors would actually purchase the book if it was presented to them. Now and then I am tempted to dip into my own collection and offer a key issue to an individual who has been claiming that they would buy it immediately if only they could find a copy. I wonder!

Sales: Batman #11 VG $1,200, More Fun #58 fine $1250, All Star #31 VG $250

The largest comic book show in Florida takes place this month. I am anxious to see if it will produce a few substantial sales or become just another flea market. I will be setting up with as strong a selection as in recent memory and hope for a return to our glory days. Do any of you remember when we all got together at the cons to swap and sell and add to our collections and always put the fun of the hobby ahead of money? The Phil Sueling shows of the late '60's and the early San Diego cons were just this way!

That will wrap us for another month. Have a healthy spring and a busy summer. If visiting the Walt Disney World area please stop by and say hello! ■

Collectors should note that the opinions expressed in CBM Market Reports are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Seasoned hobbyists are acutely aware that prices vary based on geographic location, time of year, and a number of other marketplace factors.

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MAIL *(Continued from page 7)*

decision to trade $31,000 worth of books for Suspense #3 is worthy of note for all collectors… whether you agree with the significant investment or not. Suspense #3 does overlap two of the three collector groups–the rarity collector, and the aesthetic collector, and perhaps even touches on the historical collector. There's also the fact that Schomberg did the art… and what art!

The historical significance of this rare comic is unarguably important–and a rare piece of the comic book history puzzle.

Imagine the impact of the cover when it was published. Few comics represent so many elements of social horror. (That's primarily why I purchased my copy).

In these times when it seems as if nothing is sacred and our society has become desensitized to even the most heinous crimes, this book still evokes strong emotions! I've seen the shock on the faces of collectors and noncollectors alike when they see it for the first time. With one of the most horrific covers ever… and the fact that it was published by a "third tier" company… it's surprising that any copies still exist at all. With a cover so controversial, this book must have been destroyed by irate and shocked adults on sight. Books like Suspense #3 (the atrocity of human genocide) and All Top #8 (blatant racism) showcased the ultimate in taboos, and could never be produced today… whereas books like Fighting Yank #10 are merely unnerving by comparison.

Mark Fischler, New York

Send "fix" to Tennessee!

Keep putting off writing this letter because I keep thinking that it will stop, but it doesn't. Why are you doing this to me (and others)? Over twenty years ago, when I started collecting comic books again, I just wanted a nice collection of EC science fiction and Disney (especially Barks). Through the years, my comic book taste expanded and I collected a little bit of everything. A couple of years ago, I finally started working to get my collection back to the basics, spurred on by economic considerations. But Nooo...! You have to come along with the new and improved CBM. Just when I think I have my urges under control, you print articles about Joe Kubert, missing Four Colors, Archies, Wally Wood, JLA, and on and on. On top of that, you print illustrations that start my mouth to drooling and push me into searching through those comic book dealers' lists. This has got to stop! CBM should be banned! It wantonly entices collectors to expand their want lists (Is that an accident pun?) into genres that they had not considered before. Suddenly everything becomes desirable and there is no stopping. CBM is like a drug dealer, always pushing his victims into harder and harder stuff. When are you going to wake up to your responsibility and stop publishing such a fascinating magazine? Somebody, please help me.... I eagerly await your next issue.

David Noah, addict, Tennessee

Thanks to everyone who took the time to write… we really enjoy your letters! Please note letters maybe edited for content and space. Please send your correspondence to: CBM's Marketplace Mail, P.O. Box 180900, Coronado, CA 92178 or FAX (619) 437-1993 Email us at: cbmktpl@ix.netcom.com

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Comic-Quizz

by Rob Satonica

TAKE THE CBM COMIC KNOWLEDGE CHALLENGE!

Welcome to **CBM**'s Comic Quizz, a column devoted to tidbits and trivia from all ages of comic book history. Each month we will present interesting facts, figures and comic folklore that will challenge your knowledge and tickle your memory banks! Subjects will include stuff you know... stuff you don't know... and stuff that will surprise you!

Q: For more than four decades, this writer has worked at all of the major comic publishing companies, writing and editing hundreds of titles. He was the first person to follow Stan Lee on *Fantastic Four* as writer, wrote the *Flash Gordon* comic for King, was the editor of the entire Warren magazine line until 1967, and was made editor-in-chief of Epic Comics when it was formed in the early 1980s. Who was this comic industry legend?

A: *Archie Goodwin.*

Q: Bernard Bailey had a long career writing and drawing comic characters. His Spectre series in *More Fun Comics* stands as one of the finest strips during the Golden Age. While he is best known for his superhero work, he got his start in comics before Superman even appeared. What comic contained his first published work?

A: *Wow What A Magazine #1.*

Q: Frank McLaughlin has had a long and distinguished career as an artist for over 40 years. He is best known for his inking work, but he is also a consummate penciller and storyteller. Having been trained in Judo since 1953, he brought his knowledge of the martial art to a character he created in 1965. This strip contained authentic Judo depictions and terms, and is considered among Frank's best work. Which character was this?

A: *Judo Master (Charlton).*

Q: What comic do historians claim contains the first crossover of two characters?

A: *Marvel Mystery #8 (Sub Mariner & Human Torch).*

Q: One year after Superman first appeared, he was given his own magazine. But readers of this new book would have to continue reading *Action Comics* for new stories, as the Superman book would contain only reprints until nearly a year later with issue #4.

However, there was a new Superman story published during this time, beyond what was appearing in *Action Comics*. What comic contained this first non-reprint Superman story to appear outside of *Action Comics*?

A: *New York World's Fair 1939.*

Q: *Marvel Feature* is often considered to be Ant-Man's re-intro since the 1960s, but he appeared several months prior to this, complete with the updated costume that he would sport when he was given his solo series in *Marvel Feature*. What book contained his reintroduction?

A: *Avengers #93.*

Q: After the success of the Flash in *Showcase* #4, many other original DC characters were given updated Silver Age counterparts. Characters like Green Lantern, Atom, and Hawkman went on to great success and popularity. Eventually, DC writers and editors decided to reintroduce DC's Golden Age greats in the Silver DC universe. Of all these Golden Age characters, who was the only one to receive his own title during the Silver Age?

A: *The Spectre.*

Q: This hero has been a mainstay of the DC universe since the early '40s, yet was never included in any group nor was he given so much as a cover appearance until the Silver Age. Who was he?

A: *Aquaman.*

Q: This short-lived series stands out as one of the better comics to tackle the changing times and relevant issues of the 1970s. It was written by a woman and its stories reflected the growing womens' movement. One of its issues even contained a letter from Frank Miller praising its female lead character. Which book was this?

A: *The Cat.*

Q: By the time he brought the Silver Age Flash to life, Carmine Infantino had already worked in the comics industry for nearly two decades. Over time, his work would include many of DC's greatest titles, including Batman. Prior to his starring role in revitalizing the Flash, he had worked on several major characters such as Hillman's Airboy and even Marvel's Human Torch! Although his first work would be on a minor character, it was published by one of the biggest comic book companies of the Golden Age. Which publisher was it?

A: *Fawcett (Spy Smasher).*

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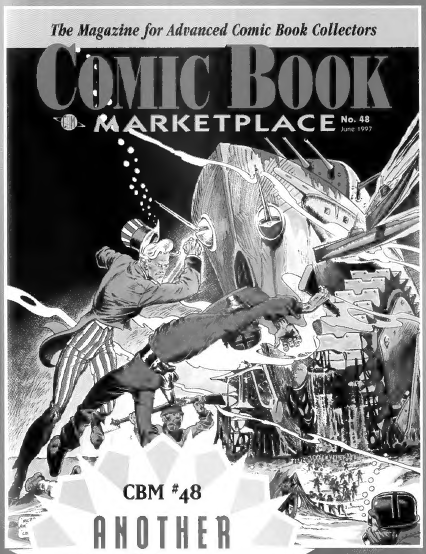

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